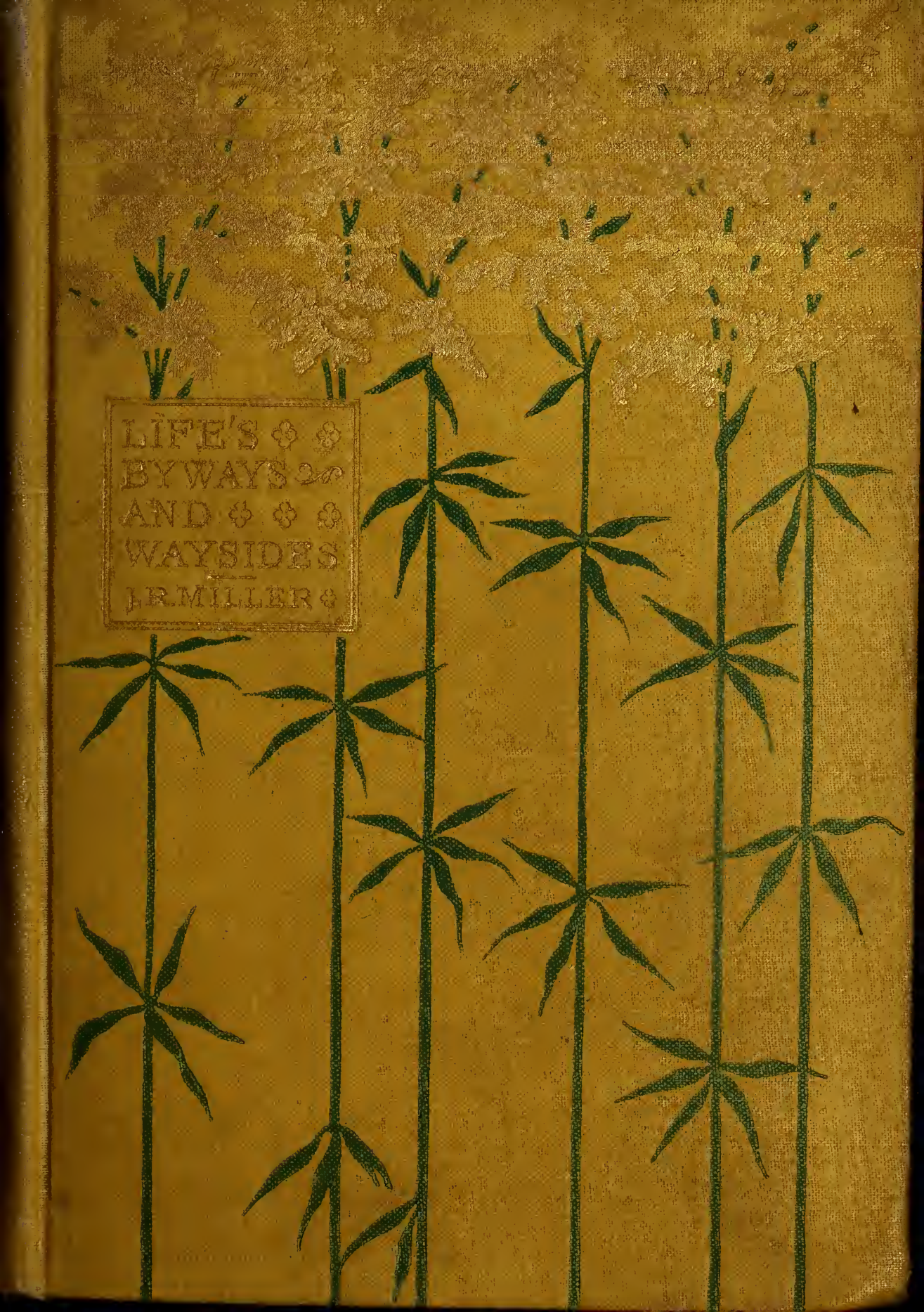
LIFE'S
BYWAYS
AND
WAYSIDES
J.R.MILLER

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LIFE'S BYWAYS AND WAYSIDES

By J. R. MILLER, D.D.

AUTHOR OF WEEK-DAY RELIGION,
IN HIS STEPS, ETC.

"*The highways were unoccupied,*
And the travellers walked through byways"

BOOK OF JUDGES

"*Some seeds fell by the wayside*"

ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

H1914
aa

PHILADELPHIA
PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION
AND SABBATH-SCHOOL WORK
1895

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THESE chapters are at the best only fragments of teaching. They have no close connection save as they all touch life at some point, and have as their aim the giving of impulse, cheer, encouragement, and hope. The first thing in true Christian living is to get acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ, and to enter into close relations of love, faith, and obedience with him. Possibly there may be some words in these pages which will give to an earnest reader fresh glimpses of Christ and make a little plainer the way of duty and the possibilities of Christian living. To help even one soul out of the shadows into the light, out of sorrow into joy, out of weakness into strength, out of doubt into faith, will make this little book worth while.

J. R. M.

PHILADELPHIA

"A broken song—it had dropped apart
Just as it left the singer's heart,
And was never whispered upon the air,
Only breathed into the vague 'Somewhere.'

A broken prayer—only half said
By a tired child at his trundle-bed;
While asking Jesus his soul to keep,
With parted lips, he fell fast asleep.

A broken life—hardly half told
When it dropped the burden it could not hold.
Of these lives, and songs, and prayers half done,
God gathers the fragments, every one."

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LIFE'S BYWAYS AND WAYSIDES

CHAPTER I.

Life's Byways and Waysides.

"There lives and sings a little lonely brook
Up in a wild where few men come to look,—
Living and singing in the dreary pines,
Yet creeping on to where the daylight shines.

Pure from the heavens, in mountain chalice caught,
It drinks the rain, as drinks the soul her thought;
And down dim hollows where it winds along
Pours its life burden of unlistened song."

Many of the best things of life are found in the byways. The map-makers show us the great thoroughfares, but they pay no heed to the country roads and the paths that run through the meadows, forests, and gardens, and climb the mountain sides. Yet many of the loveliest things in nature are found along these byways. Much of the world's beauty hides in out-of-the-way

nooks, where human feet rarely go. Some of the sweetest flowers on the earth grow on beetling crags, or in the crevices of cold, gray rocks, where one would scarcely expect to find any trace of life. Nature does not array herself in loveliness merely to be seen of men, for in the depths of great forests and in inaccessible valleys among lofty mountains, where no human eye has ever looked upon them, the flowers are as rich in their beauty as in the gardens where throngs are ever passing and admiring.

"White lilies and fragrant, behold
How coyly they nestle and fold
Their petals round hearts of deep gold,
Wearing never a stain of the sod,—
And content on the lake's placid breast
With shadows to float and to rest,
Giving freely their sweetest and best,
To forests primeval, untrod,—
Enriching the water and air,
And abiding in peace, unaware
That nothing on earth is more fair
Than white lilies, created by God!"

There are byways also in life. There are a few distinguished people whom everybody seeks to know and whose praises are borne on every breeze. But, meanwhile, in the list of those unknown to fame are countless lives just as

noble, as brave, as holy, as unselfish, as useful, as many of those who receive the world's commendation. The real worth of men's and women's lives is not to be rated by the measure of their earthly fame. Popularity itself is ofttimes but the whim of a day, to be replaced to-morrow by forgetfulness and neglect, perhaps by execration. There is a picture by Tintoretto, which shows Jesus on his cross. Then, as the observer looks closely, he sees in the background an ass feeding on withered palm leaves, the palms which had been waved on Palm Sunday. This feature of the picture is intended to recall the acclaim of the triumphal entry in contrast with the demand of the people, five days later, for the crucifixion of Jesus.

Fame is often but the glitter of an hour. Then, even when it is born of love, and is the just meed of true worth, it carries in it no disparagement of other lives which do not receive human praise. Many of the unpraised have as high encomium with God as those whom men applaud. Many of earth's unsung heroes are as real heroes in the sight of angels as those for whom monuments are set up in public squares and whose deeds are commemorated in oration and song. Many of the world's nameless saints have as high honor in heaven as those whose devotion,

service, and sacrifice are enshrined in immortal memory in the church. If all the life of any day could be seen, it would appear that in the quiet byways, in lowly homes, and among the poor, there are thousands of God's children who are living nobly, beautifully, self-sacrificingly, making whole neighborhoods purer, sweeter, yet hearing not one word of human praise. They stay near the heart of Christ. They come every morning from his presence, their very garments smelling of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces. They go through their humble daily rounds in the spirit of love. They pour blessings on the common paths, wherever they move, making the world a little sweeter, happier, and better for their staying in it. We do not know how much of

> "The healing of the world
> Is in its nameless saints."

There are byways of usefulness. There are in every community a few people who are noted for their large charities, for their valuable services, or for their personal helpfulness. They are like the shadow of a great rock in a weary land to the troubled and distressed who turn to them. They are comforters in every home of sorrow. Their influence is a benediction

over a wide neighborhood. They have a share in every good work.

But there are many others who, in quiet ways, and without appreciation, give out blessings scarcely less rich and helpful. The circle in which they move is narrower. The things they do seem smaller. Yet they minister continually in Christ's name and seek not to be ministered unto. They shine as quiet lights, brightening a little space about them.

Some of the divinest things done on this earth are done by the poor for others who are poor. They make sacrifices and spend their strength in rendering personal assistance in times of trouble. The other day, at the house of a sick woman, another woman was met, who had walked three miles, carrying one child in her arms, with another tugging at her skirts, for the purpose of putting her neighbor's house in order, preparing some food, and doing whatever she could for the comfort of the patient. The rich give their money, but the poor give themselves. Nothing is holier than such ministry, and yet it gets no earthly praise.

Mary Lyon used to say to her pupils on graduation day, "My dear girls, when you choose your fields of labor, go where nobody else is willing to go." There are always plenty of

workers for conspicuous places. There is no trouble in finding pastors for great city churches and men for the positions which pay large salaries. There are many kinds of service for which there are scores of candidates. After having passed through the experience of considering the claims and qualifications of the applicants for one of these conspicuous and attractive places, one would never think that laborers are few. There seem to be a great many people who reverse the counsel—that they go where nobody else is willing to go—and try to get their field of labor where everybody else would like to go.

But, meanwhile, what about the byways of service and usefulness? There is always room enough here for all who will consecrate themselves to such work for the Master, and there is a field here also for the largest measure of usefulness. There is no throng at the gate, pressing applications, urging brilliant gifts, and bringing piles of endorsements and commendations, competing for the privilege of doing the Master's work in these obscure and unsalaried places. There are not many who are really seeking to go where nobody else is willing to go. Here, indeed, it is found that the Master's lament—the harvest is plenteous and the laborers are few—is still to be made.

Yet, in all the world there are no richer fields for Christ's service than are found in these byways. No one can do more wisely than to choose a place and a work which no other one desires to take. Years ago there lived and wrought in Italy a great artist in mosaics. With bits of glass and stone he could produce the most striking works of art, works which brought a great price. In his shop there was a boy whose business it was to keep the place in order. One day he came to his master and asked that he might have for his own the bits of broken glass which were thrown upon the floor. The boy's request was granted. "The bits are good for nothing," said the master; "do as you please with them." Day after day the child might have been seen examining the pieces, throwing some away, and laying others carefully aside.

One day the master came upon a beautiful work of art in an unused storeroom. The poor boy, with an artist's soul, had used the rejected fragments, and had patiently and lovingly fashioned them into this—a real masterpiece. So may those do who choose to serve in life's byways, doing the things of love which no others care to do. These are Christliest ministries. When the Master comes, it will be seen that those who have wrought in these lowly ways

have been preparing for themselves a record of blessing whose glory shall be eternal.

There is another class of Christian service which may be called wayside ministry. Much of the best work of life is of this order. We do not plan to do it. We go out to do other things, and on our way this comes to our hand and we do it, and it proves full of helpfulness and blessing.

Many of the most beautiful deeds of love in the life of Jesus were wayside ministries. One day he was going with a troubled father to heal his dying child. As he passed through the crowds there was a timid touch on the hem of his garment. There was a heart's cry in the touch, a poor woman's pleading for healing. Instantly Jesus stopped, not minding the appealing look in the eyes of the anxious father, and patiently and sweetly ministered to the need of the sufferer who had crept up timidly behind him. The healing of this woman who touched the hem of his garment is one of the most interesting of all the miracles of Jesus, and yet it was a piece of wayside ministry, which came, as it were, by accident, without purpose, into his life, and was wrought as he hurried on another errand.

The talk with Nicodemus seems also to have

been a bit of wayside ministry. It does not appear to have been planned for as part of the day's work. We may suppose that one evening the Master came to the house of a friend, weary from the day's toils and strifes. He was preparing for a quiet, restful evening when a visitor was announced. Nicodemus, the ruler, came in and desired to talk awhile with the Rabbi. Then followed that wonderful conversation which has proved such a blessing all the years since, and which was but a fragment of unstudied wayside talk.

Another time the Master was very weary after a long journey in the heat, and sat down on an old well-curb to rest, while his disciples went to a neighboring village to buy food, for he was hungry as well as tired. He had just settled down for a quiet time of rest, when there came a woman to the well to draw water. Her sore need appealed to his quick sympathy, and he roused himself to help her. The conversation which took place—one of the very gems of the gospel—was also an hour's wayside talk.

These incidents illustrate and confirm the statement that much of the most valuable service in the life of Jesus was wayside ministry. As he went here and there on his purposed errands these opportunities for helpfulness were con-

tinually breaking in upon him, and he never thrust one of them from him. There was not a day, however full, whose interstices were not crowded with common kindnesses to those he met on the way,—pieces of beautiful wayside work. Sometimes he was working miracles, sometimes he was preaching, but always, wherever he went, he was serving in a thousand gentle ways.

There is a legend that, when Jesus arose from his grave and walked out of Joseph's garden, white lilies blossomed in his footsteps, so that wherever he went bloom and beauty sprung up. The legend faintly illustrates what was true of him all his days on earth. Blessings followed in his footsteps. The sick were healed, discouraged ones were cheered, sorrowing ones were comforted, and the weary received inspiration and strength from his words.

In our degree—lesser because of the littleness of our lives—all of us may continually perform a wayside ministry as we go along on our purposed errands for God. We have our allotted tasks for the day, and these are enough to fill our hands. But this need not make machines of us. We have human hearts, and while we are busy, with not a moment to lose, our sympathy and love may be flowing out to all whom

we meet or touch. We may be kind to our fellows who are working beside us. We may be thoughtful in speech. Our face may carry in it a benediction for every one who passes. Our merest hand-shake and cheerful "Good-morning" may be full of God's hearty love, and may send those whom we salute to a brighter, braver, happier day.

"Such a heart I'd bear in my bosom,
That threading the crowded street,
My face should shed joy unlooked for
On every poor soul I meet;
And such wisdom should crown my forehead,
That, coming where counsels stand,
I should carry the thoughts of justice,
And stablish the weal of the land."

Such wayside kindnesses will never hinder us in our day's task-work. Jesus bade his disciples salute no man by the way as they passed abroad on his errands. That was because in Oriental lands it took a long while to make such a salutation, and time spent in such a senseless way was wasted, when human lives were waiting for the coming of the messenger and the word of mercy he bore. But we can give out our blessings of love as we go by, without wasting time or dallying on our way. We need not even slacken our pace nor lose a moment.

Then, even if, sometimes, services of love do break into our busy days and do hinder us somewhat, may it not be that these are fragments of God's will, bits of God's work, sent for us to do, even at the cost of interrupting our own plans, breaking into our own programme? This is the only way the Master can get some of us to do any work of his, for our hearts and hands are so full of our own things that we have no time for tasks for him. We need never fear that our hands will be any less full at the end because we have slackened our pace a little, now and then, to do some slight wayside service for Christ.

There is a story of one who began to run in a race and ran well,—was foremost of all. But by and by he stopped to lift up a fallen child and place it out of danger, thus losing something of what he had gained. Farther on, a fainting comrade appealed to his sympathy, and he turned aside to help him to rise. Again he stayed his steps for a little to guide a feeble woman to safety. Whenever duty called or sorrow appealed, he left his chosen path to give aid or comfort. Thus he fell behind, and another won the prize which might have been his. He stood unheeded, uncrowned, with empty hands, at the end. But who will say that in heaven's sight

he was not the real winner of the race? He had lost the prize, but he had brightened all the course with gentle ministries of love. Many of what to men seem failures will prove in the great revealing to have been divinest successes. To be true and to strive truly is to succeed, though nothing seem to come of it. Kate Tucker Goode writes,—

He cast his net at morn where fishers toiled,—
  At eve he drew it empty to the shore;
He took the diver's plunge into the sea,
  But thence within his hand no pearl he bore.

He ran a race, but never reached his goal;
  He sped an arrow, but he missed his aim;
And slept at last beneath a simple stone,
  With no achievements carved about his name.

Men called it failure; but for my own part
  I dare not use that word, for what if heaven
Shall question, ere its judgment shall be read,
  Not "Hast thou won?" but only "Hast thou striven?"

It may be that those who live a life of love in this world, while they also do well their part in the business of the passing days, will sometimes seem losers. They have not gotten on so well in the world as their competitors. Yet their loss is truest gain. It is not worth while to live at all, if love be left out. The priest and

the Levite got clear of some delay, some trouble, and some cost by passing on when they saw the wounded man by the wayside; but who will say that the good Samaritan did not make more of his opportunity that day than they did? The priest and the Levite neglected the wayside work for humanity which was offered to them, sparing themselves trouble but missing the reward of faithfulness. The good Samaritan stopped in his journey to do love's service, doing it well, making personal sacrifice to do it, but he was never sorry for it, nor the poorer for what it cost him.

Life's byways and waysides are full of opportunities for noble service. He is wise who is not afraid to leave the beaten path and the purposed task to do God's work where it waits.

CHAPTER II.

Unto His Nest Again.

If I can stop one heart from breaking,
  I shall not live in vain;
If I can ease one life the aching,
  Or cool one pain;
Or help one fainting robin
  Unto his nest again,
  I shall not live in vain.

Emily Dickinson.

One day, President Lincoln and a friend were walking together in a field, when they found a little bird fluttering in the grass. It had fallen out of its nest in the bushes, and could not get back again. The great, gentle-hearted man stopped in his walk, stooped down, picked up the little thing, and put it back into its place. If it was a noble deed for a great man to lift a fluttering bird back into its place; if even helping one fainting robin unto its nest again redeems a life from uselessness, what work of high honor is it to help back a fainting human soul into its nest of faith and love in the bosom of Christ! That is the work Christ is doing continually.

That is what he wants us to do in his name when we find a soul that has fallen out of the nest of trust and peace.

John the Baptist had lost the perfectness of his confidence. This seems very strange to us. We remember his noble words, as he foretold the Messiah, then as he pointed him out to his disciples and spoke of his glory. We remember his sublime courage when he faced the terrible Herod and reproved him for his sin. Is it possible that a shadow of doubt ever came over his sky? Yet listen to the question which his disciples are sent to ask Jesus: "Art thou he that should come? or do we look for another?" Why should such heroic faith as we see in John by the Jordan be changed to doubt and fear a little later?

We must remember John's circumstances. For a few months, multitudes flocked to hear him preach, and then the throngs melted away. His mission was only to prepare the way for Christ, and when Christ came John paled, as the morning star pales before the sunrise. It is hard to be forgotten by those who a little while ago sang one's praises. Then, John was now in prison in one of the gloomiest castles ever built, in one of the most desolate places of the earth. To any man such a prison must have

had its dreadful horrors, but to John this imprisonment must have been an unspeakable bitterness. He had lived, a child of nature, in the freedom of the mountains and the deserts, breathing the air of heaven and gazing up by night at the stars. Worse than death to this untamed, passionate spirit was the prison of Machærus. No wonder that, shut up in its desolate dungeon, this great eagle soul began to lose its majestic courage.

Meanwhile, to his prison there came fragmentary reports of the ministry of Jesus. He was very popular. Throngs followed him. He wrought many miracles. But why was his forerunner left unhelped, undelivered, in this dark dungeon? He had been faithful to Jesus; why did not Jesus come and open these prison-doors for him? Among so many mighty works, could not one be wrought to release him? Was it just, was it right, that he should be neglected here, in the darkness and the wretchedness, while Jesus was in the midst of great honor? Perhaps such questions arose in the mind of John, as he lay in his dungeon and heard of the works of Jesus. Is it any wonder that "the eye of the caged eagle began to film"?

There are true Christians in every age who have their times of spiritual discouragement.

No doubt a child of God should always rejoice. Yet some of the holiest saints who ever lived have had experiences of disheartenment. What earnest soul is there that never finds in the passionate supplication and longing of the forty-second psalm its own liturgy of longing?

There are many causes which may produce spiritual depression. Some people have a gloomy temperament. They live in the valleys, and the valleys do not catch the morning sunshine until long after the mountain tops have been gilded. Thus Thomas was the last of the disciples to get the joy of the resurrection. This same disposition keeps many good Christian people much of the time in the shadows. Sometimes sickness is the cause of despondent feelings. Ofttimes persons whose faith is ordinarily bright and clear are cast into gloom when there is no spiritual reason whatever, solely by their physical condition. Sore trials sometimes cause the clouding of faith. Peter wrote: "Ye are in heaviness through manifold trials." Sometimes, in the sharpness and in the continuance of affliction, the heart grows weary and is thrown out of its nest of peace. Or there may be mental perplexities caused by questionings that receive no answer.

These are a few of the causes which tend to

produce spiritual disheartenment, and lead good people to ask whether or not Jesus is the Saviour and the Friend they had supposed him to be. We all know that we do not need to have these doubts and fears, that we should never be shaken for a moment out of our nest of confidence and peace. The word of God is: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee." Amid all trials, gloom, sorrows, mysteries, questionings, there is one blessed truth on which we may rest. Browning puts it in one great, noble sentence:

"God, thou art love; I build my faith on thee."

Yet we are all human, and weak because human. The strongest of us may be swept away for a time from our refuge, or at least may lose the full joy of our Christian hope.

What should we do in such experiences? We have the answer in the example of John. He sent two of his disciples to Jesus to ask him plainly, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" Instead of nursing his questionings, in the gloom of his dungeon, he laid them at once before Christ. That is what we should do with all our fears and perplexities —take them to Christ. No other can answer them so well as he can. No other will answer

them so gladly, so wisely, so lovingly. He was not impatient with John when he sent to ask his question. Good men sometimes are impatient with any who have doubts, or who are swept away from their moorings. But Jesus never was. With unbelief he had no sympathy. He not only marveled at men's unbelief; it angered him. But with doubt, or sincere questioning, he had infinite patience, and took the greatest pains to help the inquirer into the full, clear light.

Mark well the distinction between doubt and unbelief. "Doubt is can't believe," says a recent writer; "unbelief is won't believe. Doubt is honesty; unbelief is obstinacy. Doubt is looking for light; unbelief is content with the darkness." Jesus severely reproved unbelief; but when any one came to him with questionings, seeking light, desiring to find the truth, he dealt with him with wondrous gentleness. He sat down and talked with Nicodemus. He showed Thomas the wounds in his hands and feet. He let the Baptist know the beautiful work he was doing. He is the same to-day. If we have questionings or fears, we may be sure of most patient, gentle dealing if we bring them to him. He will never chide for our dullness and slowness in understanding; he will teach us what we want to know. One writes:

Unto His Nest Again

The years
Roll back, and through a mist of tears
I see a child turn from her play
And seek with eager feet the way
That led her to her father's knee.

"If God is good and kind," said she,
"Why did he let my roses die?"
A moment's pause, a smile, a sigh,
And then, "I do not know, my dear;
Some questions are not answered here."

"But is it wrong to ask?" "Not so,
My child. That we should seek to know
Proves right to know, beyond a doubt;
And so some day we shall find out
Why roses die."

And then I wait,
Sure of my answer soon or late;
Secure that love doth hold for me
The key of life's great mystery;
And, oh! so glad to leave it there!
Though my dead roses were so fair.

Our Lord's own word is comforting: "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." It is faith we want. Faith is believing when we cannot see. Wait a little longer and all the sad mystery shall be cleared away. A tourist tells of sailing out of the muddy waters of Lake Huron into the crystal

waters of Lake Superior. When night came on, the vessel was in Lake Huron and his eye could not penetrate beneath the surface. Rising in the morning, he came on deck, and looking over the prow, he was surprised to find how clear the water was through which the vessel was moving. He could see the great jagged rocks, and it seemed as if the keel would strike upon them. In reality, however, they were fifty or sixty feet below the surface. The water was so clear that the depth appeared to be only a few feet.

We are moving now through dark, cloudy waters. Mysteries impenetrable surround us. We cannot understand the things that befall us. We cannot comprehend the deep things of God, of Christ, of the Bible, and of Providence. But as we move on we shall pass at length out of the obscurities and mysteries into the clear, crystal knowledge of heaven. It is said in Revelation that there shall be no more sea in heaven. To the ancients the sea was the emblem of mystery. To say there shall be no sea in heaven means that there shall be no mystery there. All that here is dark and strange shall there be made clear.

The comfort Christ gives to those who come to him with their doubts and fears may not be

the removal of the things that cause the darkness. John was not released from prison after he had sent his disciples to Jesus. Jesus did not go out to the desert and tear down the frowning walls that shut his friend away in the gloom. John was left there, and before a great while died as a martyr. But when the messengers returned and told their master what they had seen and what Jesus had said to them, we may be sure John's doubts fled away and assurance of peace came again into his heart.

Nor will Jesus now always remove the things that discourage us. But he will give us grace to believe in his love even when we cannot see, and to wait in faith for the fuller, clearer revealing. Indeed, sometimes the sorrows and losses that cause us so much darkness and doubt are caused by the removing of obstacles in the way of our wider vision. There were some lilac bushes at the window of a farmer's house. They kept out the sunshine and air, and they obstructed the view so that the mountains could not be seen. One day the farmer's axe was heard, and bush after bush was cut away. "Only a little more cutting," he said, "and we shall get it." Then the mountains could be seen from the window. It is ofttimes thus with our earthly joys. They are very sweet, but they hide our view of the

Delectable Mountains. Money is lost. Loved ones are taken from us. Earthly honors are cut off. Luxuries are swept away. Remorselessly the axe cuts into our hedgerows of beauty and we cry out in alarm. But when the cutting is done we see more clearly; we have wider views; we behold lovely things we had never seen before. One says, "I never knew the meaning of that precious text till my trouble came." Another says, "I never loved God so much as since he took my baby home." Another says, "I never knew what it was to trust God and rest in his love, until my money was taken away." Thus our very trials, which at the time darken the sky for us, help, ofttimes, to lead us to firmer faith and securer trust.

It is interesting to notice the way in which Jesus answered John's doubts. While the messengers were present, waiting for the answer, Jesus cured many persons of diseases and plagues, and of evil spirits, and on many blind he bestowed sight. Then he said: "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good tidings preached to them." John had had wrong views of Christ's mission. Jesus shows him that the true glory

of his Messiahship was in its tenderness and grace, its gentle deeds, its blessings of healing and comfort, its thoughtfulness for the poor.

What was it in these works that proved Christ's Messiahship? Was it the fact that they were supernatural? No; it was primarily the fact that they were deeds of love. We may not undervalue the supernatural in the ministry of Christ, as evidence of his divine mission. The God shines out in all his life. Yet he never wrought a miracle merely for display, or to prove his divinity. The real glory of Christ was in the divine love that wrought in and through all his miracles as well as in his most common acts. The glory of Christ is seen to-day wherever Christianity has gone. Look at the works of mercy which are wrought in Christ's name. Go among the hospitals, into asylums for the blind, refuges for orphans, and homes for the aged and for the poor. Follow the Christian workers of any true Christian church in their rounds of blessed ministry among the sick, the troubled, the sorrowing, and in their visits to the poor, the outcast, and the prisoner. Men say miracles ceased with the apostles. Well, grant it; but "the greater works" which Christ said his followers should do—greater than he had done—have never ceased.

The power of Christ is working in his church to-day as really as ever it did. It is hampered and hindered, and ofttimes balked of its loving purpose, by the imperfection of the lives of those who represent Christ; the grace of Christ loses much of its sweetness and its power in its transmission through the poor human lives which are the lines of communication between God and the world. Yet with all that is imperfect in the church, God's glory is flowing everywhere, and the world is being blessed.

There is a practical lesson which we should not fail to take in passing. If we would give the world evidence that Christianity is divine, we must do as Jesus did when he would answer John's question. We are not called to open blind eyes, to unstop deaf ears, to heal the lame, to raise the dead; but we are called to be loving and sympathetic, comforters of sorrow, friends to the widow and orphan, and a blessing to every life that touches ours.

One who had been a student of theology writes: "One of my beloved professors had been giving us a very able lecture upon some of those risk questions of biblical criticism, questions which somewhat induced doubt and tended to unsettle. But it so happened that that very afternoon, when the lecture was over, I had to crush my hat on

my head and run to my district. I had something there to do which checked and corrected all unsettling effects of biblical criticism. I had to go into one house where, upon the only table in the room, there was a long coffin, with two small ones beside it. The mother had died suddenly, and two little children also had died within the same day. As I stood there, all notion of being unsettled by what I had heard an hour before utterly vanished from me."

There is no other cure for doubt so effective as to take up the cross of Christ and go after him into the lanes and alleys, and amid the world's poverty, and need, sorrow, and sin, setting our feet in the prints of his shoes, and carrying his gospel into the darkest places. In doing his will we shall learn to know of the doctrine. In trying to do his work we shall find solution for the mysteries that perplex us. Instead, therefore, of troubling ourselves over the difficulties that men are finding, perplexing ourselves over the questions they are raising, we should turn our faces toward the world's suffering and woe, and seek to carry into it a little of the love and grace of Christ. This is a better cure by far for our doubts and perplexities than we can ever find in controversy and disputation.

Longfellow, in one of his poems, tells of

passing through his garden and seeing on the ground a fallen bird-nest, ruined and full of ruin. But when he looked up into the tree he saw the little birds, uncomplaining, busy there among the branches, building a new nest for themselves. Here is a lesson for any who have lost the joy of their Christian faith. The nest of trust in which they once found such sweet peace has been torn to shreds by the storms of trial or by the wintry winds of doubt. It seems to them, perhaps, that they can never again have the joy they once had in Christ. They are disheartened, almost in despair. But is it not worth while to fly up again among the branches and to rebuild the torn and ruined nest? Doubt is too sad a state to stay in even for a day. Believe in the love of God, the divinity of Christ, the atonement made on the cross, and the revelation of God in his word. Seek to realize in your own life the gentleness and mercy of the love of Christ. Thus you will build again a nest of peace for your soul, and your lost joy will be restored.

CHAPTER III.

The Silent Christ.

God answers prayer: sometimes, when hearts are weak,
He gives the very gifts believers seek.
But often faith must learn a deeper rest,
And trust God's silence when he does not speak;
For he whose name is Love will send the best.
Stars may burn out, nor mountain walls endure,
But God is true; his promises are sure
To those who seek.

Myra Goodwin Plantz.

Usually Jesus was quick to answer cries for help. No mother's heart ever waked so easily to her child's calls as the heart of Christ waked to the calls of human distress. But once at least he was silent to a very bitter cry.

It was over in the edge of a heathen country. The story begins by saying that he went into a house and wanted nobody to know that he was there. He desired a little time of quiet. Even Jesus needed sometimes to rest. But he could not be hid.

An Indian legend tells of a sorcerer, who sought to hide the sun, moon, and stars in three

great chests, but failed in his effort. One cannot hide light; it reveals itself by its beams. One cannot hide fragrant flowers; their perfume reveals their place of concealment. There is a kind of wood in China, which, though buried in the earth, yet fills all the air about it with its perfumes. Nor can good lives be hid. No matter how modest and shy they are, wherever they go, people know of their presence. There is something in them which always reveals them. Never was there another such rich, loving, helpful life in this world as that of Jesus. He was everybody's friend. His heart was full of compassion. His hand was ever stretched out to minister. No wonder he could not be hid even in a strange place. Burdened hearts would be drawn to him by the very power of his love and sympathy.

A heathen woman heard of him that day and came to him with a pitiful plea. It is worth while to notice that it was this woman's trouble that sent her to Christ. If all had been sunshine in her house, she would not have gone to seek him. This is one of the blessings of trouble—it often leads us into experiences of blessing we never should have had but for our suffering. We never shall know till we have gone to heaven how much we owe to pain and sorrow.

Then we shall see that the long days when one was sick in our house were days of wondrous divine revealing, that what we called our misfortunes and calamities were really pieces of shaded path leading to nobler blessings.

It is interesting to think of the good that has come to the world through the centuries, from the mere telling of the story of this woman's trouble. Other mothers with suffering children have been encouraged to bring their burdens to Christ, as they have read of this mother and her persistent, and finally availing plea. Other pleaders at the throne of grace, discouraged for a time, as they have seen this prayer prevail at length, have taken fresh hope. No one can tell what a history of blessing this one fragment of the gospel has left among men. Yet this story never would have been written but for the pitiful suffering of a little girl. We do not know what blessing may go out into the world from the anguish in our home which is so hard for us to endure. Every human pain or sorrow is intended to make this world a little gentler, sweeter, warmer-hearted. We should never forget that the gospel, which these nineteen centuries has been changing the earth from coldness, harshness, cruelty and barbarism, into love, gentleness, humane feeling and brotherly kindness, is the

story of a sorrow—the sorrow of Calvary. We ought to be willing to endure pain to make the world more heaven-like.

We are not told anything about this woman save that she was a woman with a great burden of sorrow. She was a broken-hearted mother, with a demoniac child. But that is enough for us to know. Her sorrow makes her kin to us all. It was not her own trouble, either. She was not sick. Yet hear her cry: "Lord, help me." She represented a great class of burdened and crushed people who are bowed down under the maladies or the sins of others. Especially was she the type of many human mothers whose hearts are broken by the sufferings or by the evil ways of their children. You never enter a sick-room where a child lies in pain, and the mother keeps watch, but the mother is suffering more than the child. There are many parents prematurely stooped and old, by reason of the burdens they are bearing for or on account of their children.

This mother's persistence in pressing her plea was very remarkable. When she came first, Jesus "answered her not a word." He stood silent before her piteous appealing. But she would not be discouraged, and, as he walked on and talked with his disciples, she continued fol-

lowing, and beseeching him to have mercy on her. When the silence was broken at length, it was in words which seemed strangely harsh and insulting, coming from the lips of the Christ. Yet even the offensive words did not chill the ardor of her earnestness. Indeed, she caught at the very offensiveness, seeing hope in them. She was content to be a dog and to take a dog's portion. Even the crumbs from that table would abundantly satisfy her.

The woman's prayer and its final answer tell us that we may bring to Christ in our love and faith those who cannot come to him themselves. Many of Christ's healings were in answer to the prayers of friends. It is not enough for us to pray for ourselves. That love is not doing its full duty which does not carry its dear ones to God in supplication.

Then this mother teaches us how to pray—not timidly, faintly and feebly, but with all the earnestness of passionate love, strengthened by overcoming faith. When we are at Christ's feet with our burden, we are before One who can help us, whatever our need. We should determine to stay there till we get our plea. This mother's supplication was as different from many of our tame, mildly uttered requests which we call prayers, as the storm's wild

sweep is from evening's soft zephyr. Silence did not discourage her. Refusal did not check her pleadings. Reproach had no power to drive her away. Such faith overcomes every obstacle and wins its way to sublimest victory.

Christ's treatment of this mother is one of the strangest things in the Bible. It seems at first scarcely consistent with our conception of Christ's character. On nearly all other occasions he answered at once, but now, when the woman came to him with her broken-hearted supplication, he answered not a word. When she continued crying, his only reply was a refusal, on the ground that his mission was not to any but his own people. Then, when she still persisted and cast herself at his feet, looking up appealingly to him, and pleading still for mercy, what was his reply? Not a kindly no, such as he might have spoken, to make the pain of refusal as little as possible, but words which some haughty Pharisee might have used, calling the sorrowing woman a Gentile dog.

How can this be explained? If we were to hear that some good, generous, kindly Christian man, whom we know, had treated a poor distressed woman in this way, either we would not believe it, or we would say that the man must have been mentally disturbed,—that he was not

himself that day, because of some secret trouble of his own. Men do such things,—they do treat the poor and distressed coldly, rudely, even in these late Christian days,—but not men like Jesus. When we think of the character of Jesus —so gracious, so unselfish, so compassionate, and that he was always so ready to help even outcasts —this narrative perplexes us beyond measure.

We may as well admit, too, that there are difficulties not unlike those we meet here, in many of God's providences in our own days. We believe in God's fatherhood, in his love and grace, in his tender thought and care of his children. Yet the world is full of sorrows. Distressed mothers yet cry to heaven for relief in their troubles, and he who sits on the throne is silent to them. Prayers seem to go long unanswered, and suppliants appear to get no pity from him whom we believe to be full of compassion. These are painful perplexities with many good people.

If we can find an explanation for Christ's treatment of this heathen mother, it will help us to understand many of the other difficulties in God's ways with his people. It is very clear that what seemed unkindness was not unkindness. While Jesus was silent to her pleading and apparently indifferent, he was not really indifferent.

He did hear her, and his heart was interested in her sorrow. When he seemed to spurn her, there was not in his heart toward her the slightest feeling of real contempt or spurning. He did not despise her. His thought toward her did not change at the last, when he yielded to her importunity and healed her child. His compassion was moved at her first approach to him. He intended all the while to grant her request. His treatment of her was only seemingly unkind. Suppose she had given up and turned away when Jesus seemed to be so indifferent to her, think what she would have lost! Her faith faltered not, and at last she got the blessing.

It is evident, too, that there was a meaning of wise love in Christ's apparently harsh and severe treatment of this woman. It was the very treatment her faith needed. Of this we may be sure as we read the story through to its close. We are safe in saying that gentle kindness from the first would not have brought out such a noble faith in the end as did the apparent harshness. We are apt to forget that the aim of God with us is not to flood us all the time with tenderness, not to keep our path strewn always with flowers, not to give us everything we want, not to save us from all manner of suffering. God's aim

with us is to make something of us, to build up in us strong and noble character, to bring out in us qualities of grace and beauty. To do this he must ofttimes deny us what we ask for and must seem indifferent to our cries.

There are sentimental ideas of God prevalent which are dishonoring to him. There are those who imagine that love in God means tenderness that cannot cause pain, nor look a moment on suffering without relieving it; that must instantly hear and answer every cry for the removal of trouble. Not such a God is the God of the Bible. When suffering is the best thing for us, he is not too sympathetic to let us suffer till the work of suffering is accomplished in us. He is not too kind to be silent to our prayers when it is better he should be silent for a time to allow faith to grow strong, self-confidence to be swept away, and the evil in us to be burned out in the furnace of pain.

Here, in this very story, we have an example of human compassion that seems more tender than Christ's. The disciples begged the Master to listen to the woman's cries. They could not bear the anguish of her sorrow. It was too much for their nerves. But Jesus remained unmoved. No one will say that these rough fishermen were really more gentle-hearted than Jesus;

but they were less wise in their love than he was. They were not strong enough to wait till the right time for helping. They would have helped at once, and thus would have marred the work the Master was doing in the woman's soul.

This is a danger with all of us. Our tenderness lacks strength. We cannot see people suffer, and so we hasten to give relief before the ministry of suffering is accomplished. We think of our mission to men as being only to make life easier for them. We are continually lifting away burdens which it were better to have left resting longer on our friend's shoulder. We are eager to make life easy for our children when it were better if it had been left hard. We answer prayers too soon, ofttimes,—not asking if it were better for the suppliant to wait longer before receiving. In our dealing with human souls, we break down when we hear the first cries of penitence, hurrying to give assurance of pardon, when it were better if we left the penitent spirit longer with God for the deepening of conviction and of the sense of sin, and for the most complete humbling of the soul.

We must learn that God does not deal with us in this emotional way. He is not too tender to see us suffer, if more suffering is needed to work in us the discipline that will make us like

Christ. Here we have the key of many of the mysteries of providence. Life is not easy for us; it is not meant to be easy. Prayers are not all answered the moment they are offered. Cries for the relief of pain do not always bring instant relief.

Suppose, for a moment, that God did give us everything we ask, and did remove immediately every little pain, trouble, difficulty and hardness that we seek to have removed, what would be the result on us? How selfish it would make us! We should grow willful,—not thinking of God's will, but only of our own. We should become weak, unable to endure suffering, to bear trial, to carry burdens, or to struggle. We should be only children always and would never rise into manly strength. God's over-kindness to us would pamper in us all the worst elements of our nature and would make us only poor driveling creatures. On the other hand, however, God's wise and firm treatment of us teaches us the great lessons which make us strong with the strength of Christ himself. He teaches us to yield our own will to him. He develops in us patience, faith, love, hope and peace. He trains us to endure hardness that we may grow heroic and self-reliant.

It is evident that at no time in the progress

of this experience did Jesus mean to refuse this woman's plea. His cold silence was not denial. His apparent harshness was not rejection. He delayed for wise reasons. His treatment of the woman from beginning to end was for the training of her faith. He answered not a word, that her pleading might grow stronger. At the last he commended the woman as he commended few other people in all his ministry.

It is well for us to make careful note of this, —that in all God's delays when we pray, his aim is some good in us. Perhaps we are willful, asking only for our own way, and must learn to say, "Thy will be done." Perhaps we are weak, unable to bear pain, or to endure adversity or loss, and we must be trained and disciplined into strength. Perhaps our desires are only for earthly good, not for heavenly, and we must be taught the transitory character of all worldly things and led to desire things which are eternal. Perhaps we are impatient, and must be taught to wait for God. We are like children in our eager restlessness, and need to learn self-restraint. At least we may always know that silence is not refusal, that God hears and cares, and that when our faith has learned its lessons he will answer in blessing.

When God does not seem to answer he is

drawing us nearer to him. Ofttimes our unanswered prayers mean more of blessing to us than those that are answered. The lessons set for us in them are harder, but they are greater, richer lessons. It is better for us to learn the lesson of submission and trust than it is to get some new sweet joy which only adds to our present comfort. Whether, therefore, he speaks or is silent, he has a blessing for us.

Unanswered yet, the prayer your lips have pleaded
In agony of heart, these many years?
Does faith begin to fail? is hope departing,
And think you all in vain those falling tears?
Say not the Father hath not heard your prayer.
You shall have your desire, sometime, somewhere.

Unanswered yet? Nay, do not say ungranted;
Perhaps your part is not yet wholly done.
The work began when first your prayer was uttered,
And God will finish what he has begun.
If you will keep the incense burning there,
His glory you shall see, sometime, somewhere.

Unanswered yet? Faith cannot be unanswered;
Her feet are firmly planted on the Rock;
Amid the wildest storms she stands undaunted,
Nor quails before the loudest thunder shock.
She knows Omnipotence has heard her prayer,
And cries, "It shall be done, sometime, somewhere."

CHAPTER IV.

Tempted Like as We are.

To be like him; to keep
Unspotted from the world; to reap
But where he leads; to think,
To dream, to hope as one who would but drink
Of purity, and grow
More like the Christ; to go
Through time's sweet labyrinths pure, and brave, and true;
To stand sin's tests; to dare, to do
For him though all the price
Be stained in dye of sacrifice.
This were to be
Sustained by his infinity,
And given
A foretaste of the ecstasy of heaven.

George Klingle.

No human soul has ever escaped temptation. There have been fierce and terrific assaults before which the noblest natures have quailed, and the bravest, strongest hearts have trembled. Earth's battle-fields are not all marked out on the school-boy's maps. The stories of the world's great battles are not all told in our histories. It was just after his baptism and his

consecration to his work as the Messiah that Jesus went to his temptation. An old writer says: "All the while our Saviour stayed in his father's shop and meddled only with carpenter's chips, the devil troubled him not; now that he is to enter more publicly upon his mediatorship, the tempter pierceth his tender soul with many sorrows by solicitation to sin."

For forty days Jesus had been fasting. "If thou be the Son of God," said the tempter, "command that these stones be made bread." There is no harm in eating when one is hungry. There would seem to have been nothing wrong in Jesus' turning a few stones into loaves of bread. "Man doth not live by bread alone," said he, "but by every word of God." It is a great deal more important that I shall obey God's commandments than that I shall get bread to eat. My duty is to do God's will first, last, always; the matter of bread is secondary.

"Throw thyself down," said the tempter, "from yonder lofty pinnacle, into the crowded street, and let God keep thee from being hurt. He has promised to give his angels charge over thee." Why would it have been wrong for Jesus to do this? He said it would have been tempting God, claiming his promise in needless danger. When you rush into peril without the

divine bidding, you can claim no shelter, no protection. You are tempting God.

Satan then gave Jesus a vision of universal power, all lands at his feet—Greece, Rome, the great Orient, the broad West. "All this is yours if you will worship me." Already there was in the soul of Jesus another vision of universal power, all the world his kingdom; but it was spiritual power and the way to it led by a cross. The tempter suggested power of this world, with pomp and splendor, and the cross avoided. But think of the price: "Fall down and worship me."

It is said that a little daughter of Nathaniel Hawthorne's had a wonderful faculty for inventing stories. One day she was overheard telling her brother about a very naughty child, who grew naughtier and naughtier, till at last she struck God. As we read the story of these temptations, coming to the last one, in which the tempter asks the Son of God to fall down and worship him, is it not the child's fancy realized—naughtier and naughtier till at last he struck God?

Why was Jesus tempted of the devil? We are told that he was led—Mark says driven—by the Spirit, into the wilderness, to be tempted by the devil. It was not, therefore, an accident;

it was part of his preparation. He came from Nazareth, after thirty years of quiet life, and was baptized, and thus set apart for his mission of redeeming the world. But before he begins his work, he must be tried. Adam was tried, and he failed. The second Adam must be tried too, to prove that he is able to save men. If he had not been successful in his conflicts, how could he have delivered any others from the tempter's power?

Long, long ago,—the legend runs,—in a far-distant land, dwelt a giant—Offero. He had wonderful power. He had a strange desire to serve the mightiest king in the world. He found one who seemed great, and entered his service. Together with his king he fought many battles. One day a minstrel came to the king's court and sang, and Offero noticed that every time the name of Satan was mentioned, the king grew pale and trembled, and bent his knee and crossed himself. "Ah," said Offero, "he who is to be my master must quail at nothing. There must be a greater king than thou, this Satan whom thou dost dread. I leave thy service and I will journey till I find this mightier monarch, and I will give him my sword."

So he wandered, seeking Satan, up and down

the mountain steep, far across the trackless desert, through deep forests, resting not until he had found the arch-fiend. Before him he bowed, crying :

" I lie before thee, prostrate in the very dust;
May my right hand fail if ever it prove recreant to its trust."

For long years Offero stayed with Satan. Many were the battles they fought. Offero was a brave champion. But one day, near an ancient city, they paused to rest and to drink from a wayside fountain. Beside the fountain stood a little cross, with a figure carved upon it. Satan shrank back, and would not drink. He began to tremble, too, before the cross. Offero saw it. " Ah," he said, " thou tremblest. Why is it?" Satan answered, " On this cross the Saviour died—he, Lord of heaven and earth, greater than all kings besides, crowned now with glory. It is he I dread."

" Then I leave thee," said the giant. " I will serve none but the mightiest. I will seek this mightier king and will serve him."

So again he went forth and wandered far and wide, asking everywhere for this Saviour who on the cross had died. One day he met an ancient hermit, who taught him the gospel story,

and told him how to find the Saviour. Offero was filled with love for the Christ, the mightiest of all kings, and longed to do brave and noble things for this new Master.

"Knowest thou a deep, wide river," asked the hermit, "rushing down between dark chasms? Strong and rapid is its current, and many shrink to cross it. Thou canst aid them, mighty giant. Thou canst lend a helping hand, guiding them through the rushing floods. Thus thou canst serve the Saviour."

With joy in his heart, Offero went and crossed the foaming river, built a simple hut of branches, and became the pilgrim's guide. He strengthened many fainting souls. He saved many from death. Always, while he did his noble deeds, there arose before his eyes that figure on the cross—fair and saintly, with deep wounds on hands and feet, with a face of wondrous beauty, wearing a smile of love and peace.

One night, the great giant was sleeping in his hut, when he heard, faintly calling, a childish voice, "Offero, good Offero, wake at once, and carry me over the river." It was a wild night. The floods ran high and the winds were fierce. Through the darkness and the storm still wailed the child's voice, "Come quickly, Offero. I am weary; bear me over the river." The giant

hastened to answer the call. Through a rift in the clouds a moonbeam streamed down upon the waters, and he saw a child struggling there alone. He caught the little one in his arms and bravely set out to carry him across the stream. But at every step the child's weight increased, until the giant felt that he must sink under his load. Yet he struggled on, praying for strength, and safely reached the shore.

"Whom have I borne?" he murmured. "It is thy Lord," answered the child. "Long hast thou desired to see me. Thou thoughtest to help one of my little ones, through love for me, and thou hast borne me, thy Lord, across the waters. He who has carried the Saviour must henceforth be called Christ-Offero."

It is but a legend, and yet its teaching is beautiful. We want for our soul's Master one who fears no enemy, who trembles and quails before no power, who is matchless in his strength. We want one for our Saviour who never can be overcome. We are immortal. Not for to-day only, but through eternal years, we shall need a friendship that is not tender only, but also strong and secure. No earthly power meets this condition. The sweetest human love is but trembling weakness before the world's mighty forces. We cannot worship one who fears any foe. We

cannot trust ourselves absolutely and forever in the hands of one who is not stronger than the strongest.

Here, emerging from the wilderness, with the light of victory in his face, comes the Lord Christ. He has met the very concentration of all the world's evil and has vanquished it. We need never be afraid to trust him. There are no chains he cannot break. He is a tried Saviour. In all our struggles and temptations, we may turn to him for help and deliverance.

Jesus was tempted, too, that he might understand our experiences of temptation. "It behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest. . . . For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." These words assure us that the temptations of Christ were not mere empty forms, mere simulacra of temptations, but intense realities. He suffered, being tempted. It cost him anguish to resist. He resisted unto blood.

Power is not enough in him whom your soul craves to have for Saviour, Helper, Friend. Power alone is cold. He may be the all-conqueror. It may be that he has vanquished every energy of evil and bound the strong one in his own house. He may be resistless in his might,

and you may be secure in the shelter of his strength. But your heart craves tenderness. You must have sympathy. The one to whom you will turn as your Lord and Master must be able to enter into all the experiences of your life. This, too, we have in Jesus Christ. He is not only God, with all power; he is also man, with all human feelings, affections, emotions, sympathies. Having been tempted in all points, like as we are, he can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

There is a picture which represents an angel standing by the empty cross of our Saviour. It is in the evening, after the crucifixion. The body has been taken down and laid to rest in the grave. The crowd has dispersed. Desolation and loneliness reign about the place. There stands the angel, touching with his fingers the sharp points of the thorns in the crown which Jesus had worn. The artist's thought is that the angel looked with wonder and awe on the sufferings of Christ. He could not understand them, for angels have never suffered, and hence there is nothing in the angel-nature or experience to interpret suffering, He is trying to make out what pain is, and he cannot understand the mystery.

There are people among our friends who come

and stand beside us in our sorrow or suffering, and yet understand nothing of what we are experiencing. Their hearts are tender and their love is deep and strong, but they have never suffered, and therefore there is nothing in them to interpret to them what is going on in us. Then there comes another friend, and in his face and eye we catch at once the revealing of sympathy. He understands what is passing in our soul. He enters into our experience. Every struggle or pain in our heart finds an answering chord in his. He has suffered, himself, and his nature has thus been prepared for sympathy.

Wonderful is this power of sympathy. Wonderful is the help that passes from the sympathetic heart to other lives. It is this which gives to certain great preachers their power to help others by their words; those who listen to them hear the heart-beat in their sermons, and feel instinctively that they understand what they are saying, because they have experienced it. It is this that makes certain books so welcome to the weary, the sorrowing and the struggling; their pages breathe sympathy in every line. You can understand in others only what you have learned for yourself in your own living. If you have not suffered being tempted,

there is nothing in you to interpret to your heart what I am suffering while passing through my struggles and conflicts. But if you have fought the battles yourself, you understand what is going on in me when I am fighting them.

These are hints of what Christ brought from the wilderness in the way of preparation for his great work of priestly help. Nor are we to suppose that it was only in the wilderness that he learned life's lessons. All his years were filled with human experiences — childhood's, young manhood's, the poor man's, the working-man's, the experiences of ingratitude, of weak friendship, of false friendship, of unkind treatment, of rejection, of bitter sorrow, of death, of lying in the grave. So he stands to-day in the midst of the world of struggling humanity, and there is nothing in any heart's cry that he does not understand. It matters not what your peculiar experience may be, in him your soul finds the answering chord.

It is this that makes Jesus Christ such a real friend to those who come to him. They are sure always of perfect sympathy. He knows how hard it is for us to be good, true and patient, for he has passed through life before us. He knows how the world tempts the young man who is ambitious to succeed. He knows

how the temptation to be dishonest tries the soul of the man who is hungry. He knows all the temptations that come to us, and looks upon us in loving sympathy as we endure them. Men seem cold and indifferent, as they hurry along in their diverse ways, casting no thought upon us in our heart-hunger, in our longing, in our need; but there is One who is never indifferent. He hears the plash of every tear that falls in secret. His heart is thrilled with every feeling of pain or pleasure, of hope or fear, of joy or sorrow, that sweeps through our heart.

Yet sympathy is not all of the blessing. There are those who sympathize but give no help. Their feeling is only a feeble echo of ours. They sit down beside us in our sorrow and their hearts beat with ours, but there is no uplift in their tenderness. They put no new strength into our heart, no new courage or cheer. But Christ sympathizes and then helps. He has learned life's ways, and he guides us in them. He carried the world's sorrows, and when we are in sorrow he can give us true comfort. He knows what comes out of sorrow sweetly borne, and he can strengthen us to endure.

One of the beautiful legends of Brittany tells of a town called Is, which long since was swallowed up by the sea. The fishermen relate

strange things of this legendary city. They say that sometimes the tops of the church-spires may be seen in the hollow of the waves, when the storms rage wildly, and that during a calm the music of the buried bells is heard ringing out in sweetest notes.

It is only a legend. But in the world's great sea there are countless lives that have been buried—some in sin's floods, some in sorrow's depths. As we listen, we hear the bells ringing down in the dark waters. Some ring plaintively—the cry of pain, suffering and despair. Some ring yearningly—the longings, desires and aspirations of human souls for better life.

There is One who hears all this music, all these notes of pain and longing. The Lord Jesus Christ hears every human heart's cry, whatever its tone. It is but little that the best human love can do; but here is One who knows all, who loves better than he knows, who is able to help and to save unto the uttermost. Who would not take this all-conquering, all-sympathizing, all-helping Christ into his life as Saviour, Master and Friend?

CHAPTER V.

The Greatest Love.

"Long, long centuries
Agone, One walked the earth, his life
A seeming failure;
Dying, he gave the world a gift
That will outlast eternities."

Love is the greatest thing in the world. St. Paul tells us this in his immortal chapter in which he sings love's praises. It is greatest in its endurance. Other things fail; love never fails. Prophecies have their place, but they are like blossoms which fade and fall off when the fruit comes. Knowledge, too, is great, but knowledge becomes old, effete, outgrown, and is forever left behind as we go on to new knowledge. But love abides.

A writer in a little poem tells the story of two lovers. First, they sit by a moss-grown spring, leaning soft cheeks together. Next, we see a wedded pair, stepping from the portal amid sweet bell notes and the fragrance of flowers. Later, two faces bend over a cradle watching a

life that love has sent. Further on, we see the same two, sitting by the evening fire whose red light falls about their knees, with a cluster of little heads around them. Once more we see them,—the fire burns on the hearth, and they sit there as before; but all the heads by slow degrees have gone, leaving that lonely pair—oh, vanished past! But the same sweet love that drew them close to each other by the moss-grown spring, so long ago, still binds them together.

> "The red light shone upon the floor
> And made the space between them wide;
> They drew their chairs up side by side."

Their pale cheeks joined, and said, "Once more!"

> "Oh, memories!
> Oh, past that is!"

"Love never faileth." It lives on amid all fadings and vanishings and all changes. Love is life. Loving is living. Not to love is not to live. When love dies, there is nothing left worth while. A poet writes:

> "The night has a thousand eyes,
> And the day but one;
> Yet the light of the bright world dies
> With the dying sun."

The Greatest Love

The mind has a thousand eyes,
And the heart but one;
Yet the light of a whole life dies
When love is done.

The works that will live longest are the works that love achieves. Leave love out, and all you do without it is sordid. Let love die in your heart, and you may as well be dead. Love is life's light and glory. There are great human loves. Great is the patriot's love for his country. Some of the world's noblest heroisms have been inspired by love for native land. Great is parental love, whose holy devotion seems likest God's of all human affections. There are tender stories of the love of brothers and sisters, of friend and friend, of lover and beloved. Volumes could be written telling of the deeds of love. But there is a love greater than any, than all of these together. Human loves are but little fragments of the divine love dropped down from heaven.

Some scientist, trying to account for vegetable life on this planet, suggests the theory that when the globe was ready for it, with mellow, rich and fertile soil on its plains, but no life yet, a fragment of a meteor from some other world, where there was life, fell to the earth, bearing on it seeds or roots, which grew, thus starting

on the globe the life of another world. This is only a theory, but it illustrates the origin of love in this world. Human affection is a spark of the divine fire of love dropped out of the heart of God. All love is of God. The love of father, of mother, of brother, of sister, of lover, of friend, of patriot, of little child—all has come from God.

All the light in this world is from the sun. Wherever you find a beam shining on open field or in gloomy dungeon, it is from the one sun. Wherever you find a little flower blooming in conservatory, or garden, in the depth of the forest, or on bare mountain crag, the sun painted it. So wherever you find love in a human heart, in a home of beauty or in a hovel, in little child or old man, in saintly Christian or in breast of savage, it is from God. The heart of God is the fountain of all pure affection.

> "God hides himself within the love
> Of those whom we love best;
> The smiles and tones that make our homes
> Are shrines by him possessed."

Christ is called the Word. A word reveals the thought, the feeling, the desire, that is in the heart. Jesus Christ revealed what was in

the heart of God. God is love. Christ is the love of God brought down to the earth, so that we can see it and understand something of its wonderful character.

The love of Christ "passeth knowledge." This does not mean that we can know nothing of it. It means that we can never fully know it. We can never understand all its wonderful meaning. Everything about God passeth knowledge. Augustine was trying to comprehend the trinity, to solve the mystery of three in one and one in three. One night he dreamed that he stood beside the sea and saw a child with a shell dipping up water from the great ocean, and emptying it into a tiny hollow scooped out in the sand. When asked what he was doing, the child replied that he was putting the sea into his little lake. The great man smiled at the child's folly. "But it is no more foolish," said the child, "than what you are trying to do,—to measure in your finite human mind the infinite truth of the divine trinity." At the best we can understand only a little of the love of God revealed in Christ. But we should seek to comprehend all we can of it.

St. Paul speaks of the breadth, the length, the depth and height of the love of Christ. In its breadth it reaches out and takes in all the

race. There is not a tiny grass blade, nor a flower, growing in any nook or corner which can say, "The sun does not shine for me. The clouds do not drop their rain for me." So in no dreary spot of earth is there a man, woman or child who can say, "The love of Christ is not for me."

But while universal, it is not merely a love for the race as such, but is individual. There are men who have a sort of benevolent love for certain classes of unfortunate people, and yet have no care for any individuals of those classes. Their love is only a sentiment. But this is not the way Christ loves. He looks down with compassion upon the darkened masses in heathen lands, but has a distinct love for each individual. It is said that he calleth all the stars by their names. "Yes," you say, "but stars are so large, that it is not strange he knows all their names. I am but a tiny speck on one of God's stars. How can he have a distinct love for such a little one, among so many millions of people?" Well, you are greater than any star in all the heavens, for the stars will some day burn out and cease to be, but you are an immortal soul; you wear God's image.

Then stars are only things, while you are God's child. Does a mother love her children

only as a family? Does not each child have a distinct place in her thought and affection? God loves his children in the same way. "But there are so many of them," you say. "How can he love hundreds of millions as individuals?" God himself is so great that it is no harder for him to carry hundreds of millions in his affection than it is for a human mother to love her five or six children. Every child has all a mother's love. She does not love the first one less when the second one comes. The love of her heart is not divided into fractions and fragments by the number of her children. Each one has all the mother's love. So each human individual has all of God's deep, eternal love.

If this were only understood, however imperfectly, it would change much of the world's darkness to light. There are some who think no one cares for them. This feeling is very sad.

> "The lonely heart that knows not love's
> Soft power, or friendship's ties,
> Is like yon withering flower that bows
> Its gentle head, touched to the quick,
> For that the genial sun hath hid his light;
> And sighing, dies."

It is very sad to live unloved. There are few whose fate this is. Even for the loneliest

there is some heart that cares. But if there were no human love left on the earth, God loves every one, and his is real love, too, tenderer than a mother's, deeper, truer, stronger.

Or we may think of the length of the love of Christ. We may think of him in heaven, and his love streams down to earth and touches us. It is more than ninety millions of miles to the sun, and yet his beams come through all that vast reach of space and warm the roots of the grasses into life on the spring days and kiss the flowers into beauty and fragrance. The love of Christ is as long as from God's throne to earth's lowliest places.

Another suggestion of the length of the love of Christ comes from the words which tell us of its duration. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee." "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, . . . nor things present, nor things to come . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." When this love of Christ clasps a human life, its clasp is for eternal years.

Or we may think again of the length of the love of Christ in its wonderful forgiveness, its

infinite patience, its mercy that endureth forever. Human mercy is usually very short. We ask, "How often shall I forgive? Seven times?" We think seven times a wonderful stretch of forgiving. We say that such and such wrongs or hurts done to us are unpardonable. We go a little farther, perhaps, and say, with the air of one who is doing a very saintly thing, "I will forgive, but I cannot forget." So we carry grudges against our brother, and keep our hurt feelings, and refuse to forgive those who have injured us, and yet call ourselves Christlike. If we could get a vision of the love of Christ in its forgiveness, patience and long-suffering, it would shame our poor pitiful charity. His love never wearies of our sinning. He forgives not seven times only, but seventy times seven times. He carries no grudges. He forgets, remembers no more, forever, our sins against him, when once we repent, and he has forgiven us.

There are chapters in your life story which you would not for the world uncover to the eye of even your gentlest friend. "He would not love me any longer," you say, "if he knew these things in me." There are things in your inner life—feelings, emotions, desires, imaginations, jealousies, envyings—which you would not dare to lay open to your neighbor's gaze. "He

would loathe me," you say. Yet Christ sees all, knows all, and still he loves. He loves unto the uttermost. His mercy endureth forever. His patience never fails.

We may think also of the depth of Christ's love. How shall we fathom it? Human love is often a shallow stream—so shallow that it cannot cover even the minor faults and the trivial mistakes of its object. St. Paul says that charity covers a multitude of sins. He means that when we love a friend, our love hides from our own eyes his faults and blemishes, and overlooks his mistakes and wrong doings. But our charity as Christians—does it really cover from our eyes the multitude of faults and sins in others, even in our closest friends? Is not the stream too often so shallow that every grain of sand, every little pebble, and every weed at the bottom shows? But the love of Christ is so deep that it covers everything, hides completely out of sight the multitude of sins, buries them forever in its unfathomable abysses.

We may see the depth of the love of Christ also in his condescension. Never can we know what this condescension meant for Christ. We can talk of it, and use words which tell of it, but what it involved of sacrifice, of emptying of self, of pain and suffering, we never can

know. A German artist, painting a picture of the man of sorrows, gave up in despair when he came to the face, and painted him with his face turned away, thus hiding the countenance which he felt himself unable to put upon the canvas. So it must always be with the reverent friend of Christ who thinks of Christ's sorrows. His love passeth knowledge. We never can fathom the depth of his condescension.

Looking at this wonderful manifestation, who can doubt for a moment the love of God for him? What proof do we need to show us the divine love that was revealed on the cross? As the dawn broke, one morning, over the great desert, Merwan knelt by his tent-door and prayed. In the caravan was one who doubted that there was a God to hear or answer prayer. Coming upon Merwan as he prayed, this doubter cried, "How dost thou know that Allah is?" Swiftly toward the east, now becoming glorious with bursting light, an arm Merwan flung. "Dost need a torch to show thee the dawn?" Does any one ask for proof that God is, or that God loves? Look at the cross where the Son of God is dying for the world's redemption. "Dost need a torch to show thee the dawn?" Do you need proofs from nature—from flower, or field, or forest, or sea, or deep mine, or

arguments and evidences of the lesser kind, to prove that God loves? Here are the full glories of the divine being revealed in the splendor of love. We need no torch to show us that dawn.

We may think also of the height of this measureless love. We see its depth in the condescension of Christ to save men. We may measure its height by thinking of the exaltation which the believing sinner receives—from sin's depths, where Christ finds him, to heaven's heights, where glory enfolds him. He does not merely lift us out of the horrible pit of guilt and sin—that is only half a salvation; he also sets our feet upon a rock and establishes our goings, and puts a new song into our mouth. He restores our soul, until the old lost beauty is brought back again. He exalts us to be with him, to share the blessedness of heaven, where

> "The quenched lamps of hope are all relighted
> And the golden links of love are reunited."

This love of Christ passeth knowledge, and yet we are bidden to know it. To know it is to wake from death to life; not to know it is to abide in death. Word reached a mother during the war that her boy had been wounded. She hurried to the field and found the hospital. The doctor said, "Your boy is sleeping, If you go

in and wake him, the excitement will kill him. By and by, when he wakes, I will gradually break the news that you have come."

The mother, with her great hungry heart yearning to see her boy, looked into the doctor's face, and said: "He may never waken. If you will let me go in and sit beside him, I promise not to speak to him."

The doctor consented. The mother crept to the side of the cot and looked at her boy. How she longed to embrace him! After a few moments she laid her hand on his forehead. The moment her fingers touched his brow, the boy's lips moved, and he whispered, without waking or opening his eyes, "Mother, you have come." The touch of love's hand reached the boy's soul even in his delirious sleep.

There is One whose touch means more than a mother's. It is the touch of a pierced hand —pierced in love's sacrifice for our redemption. Some of us are unconscious of the wonderful love that is bending over us with infinite yearning. May the touch of that blessed hand reveal to our hearts the love, and may we answer in faith's whisper, "Jesus, thou hast come!"

CHAPTER VI.

Spices for Christ's Grave.

It is not the deed we do,
  Though the deed be ever so fair,
But the love, that the dear Lord looketh for,
  Hidden with holy care
  In the heart of the deed so fair.

Harriet McEwen Kimball.

Sometimes in a night of storm and darkness there will appear for a moment a little rift in the heavy clouds, showing a speck of blue sky with a single silver star shining in it. Something like this is the beautiful incident in the story of those dark hours between Christ's death and resurrection, when the women went out, after the sunsetting, to buy spices for the grave of their Friend.

It had been to them a day of unutterable sadness. The hope had gone out of their hearts. They sat in despairing grief. All was lost that made it worth while for them to live. They thought the wonderful visions they had had of the glory of the Messiah had vanished now for-

ever. All that remained to them was a sweet memory, a terrible cross, and a dark grave.

In the dense gloom of that Sabbath there is just one spot of brightness. It is the loving act of the women friends of Jesus. As soon as the holy hours of the Sabbath had closed, they hastened out to find the shops, to buy spices and ointments to carry to the tomb in the early morning, to strew upon the sacred body of their beloved dead.

Thus, the love of women shines out as a bright star when even the love of apostles remained in eclipse. One writer compares it to the nightingale which is famed for her sweet songs in the night. "She sings in the day as well; only, as other songsters are then in full chorus, her sweeter strains are not distinguishable from the rest. But at night, when all others are hushed, her song is heard, and is more sweet by reason of the contrast with the surrounding stillness. So it was with these women. They served in the day of bright sunshine, but their service was now overshadowed, so to speak, by the demonstrative crowd that thronged around the Saviour. But when the voice of the noisy, effusive crowd was hushed during the dark night of trial and suffering, which followed the brief day of popularity, they continued to give forth

the music of love and sympathy through the dark loneliness of the night."

We must notice that it was love for the dead Christ that prompted this sweet service. The women had no thought that he would rise again. Indeed, the nature of their offering shows that they had not. It was to honor his dead body that they brought the spices. They had hoped that he would live and found a great kingdom, but their hopes had perished. They had no expectation of ever seeing him again. Yet they wanted to honor him. They remembered what he had been to them while he was alive. They remembered his beautiful life, with its gentleness, purity and strength. They remembered the words they had heard him speak, which had been such an inspiration to them. It was love for a friend who had been everything to them, and now was dead, that inspired these loyal women in what they did, and not any hope of ever seeing him again alive.

They did not understand the meaning of his death. To them his life was a bewildering tragedy. Did it mean that he had failed? They could not tell; they could not understand it. But it left them without hope of seeing him again. Yet, mark how they loved and honored him, even though they understood not the glori-

ous meaning of his death, and saw in it only disaster and hopelessness.

How much more should we love and honor Christ to-day, when all is plain to us, when we see the divine love shining out in his death and know its whole blessed meaning! While these women were preparing their spices, Jesus still lay silent and cold in his grave at the door of which Roman soldiers kept their watch. But we see him risen and alive for evermore. On his head he wears many crowns. He is our friend, living and with us; not dead and remembered only from a sweet vanished past, but our companion, our guide, our helper, with us always, in all the blessedness of his love.

We have much greater reason for honoring Christ to-day than these faithful women had at the close of that sad, dark Sabbath. They prepared spices for his dead body. How can we best honor him? The grave is empty and his body needs no more to be anointed with the fragrant perfumes that are fitting for the dead. But is there not something suggestive of a true heart's offering in spices and ointments with their sweet odors? What have we to bring to honor our Redeemer?

We may bring our heart's true worship. Homage is fragrant. The sweetest spices that

grow in this world are those that grow in the garden of love. If we truly love Christ and breathe our love out to him in prayer and praise, we are honoring him in a way that is most pleasing to him. Worship is fragrant to Christ. In the ancient temple the altar of incense was the altar of prayer and praise. In St. John's vision of heaven, he saw golden vials full of odors, which were the prayers of saints. The meaning is that the worship of earth's humble believers rises up to heaven as fragrant incense. There is something exquisitely beautiful in this thought. The homage, the praise, the pleadings, of God's people rise from lowly homes, from sick rooms, from darkened chambers of grief, where loved ones kneel beside their dead, from humble sanctuaries, from stately cathedrals, and are wafted up before God, as the breath of flowers is wafted to us in summer days from sweet fields and fragrant gardens.

There was an old Jewish fancy that Sandalphon, the angel of prayer, stood at the gate of heaven, receiving in his hands the supplications and the praises of earth, which were changed to sweet flowers as he took them. The old, strange fancy is not unscriptural. Sincere heart-breathings of love and faith do indeed rise as the fragrance of sweet flowers into the presence of

Christ. When acceptable worship was offered, God was said in the Scripture to smell a sweet savor. We can honor Christ with our heart's true adoration. We can bring the spices and ointments of loving homage. Nothing else in the world is so precious to Christ as the love of his own, when it breathes out from lowly hearts and rises up to him.

There is another beautiful fragment of teaching gathered out of old rabbinical books, which says that there are two orders of angels—the angels of service and the angels of praise. The angels of praise are of a higher order than the others. No one of them praises God twice, but having once lifted up his voice in the song of heaven he perishes and ceases to be. He has perfected his being. His song is the full flower and perfect fruit of his life, that for which he was created. He has now finished his work and his spirit is breathed out in his one holy psalm. The fancy may be puerile, but there is in it a sweet thought and a deep and holy truth. The highest act of which the human soul is capable is praise, true worship. We are taught to glorify God in whatsoever we do. Adoration should rise continually from our hearts. We are made to praise our God. The unpraising life is yet an unfruitful life; at least,

it has not yet borne the sweetest, ripest, and best fruit of the Spirit, that which in God's sight is most precious of all fruits. In heaven all life is praise; and we come near to the heavenly life only in the measure that our life here is praise and homage. Thus we have in the Epistle to the Hebrews the counsel: "Through Christ then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name."

We can bring spices for Christ in service of love for him. He has redeemed us. All the hopes of our lives come out of his sacrifice for us. All our joys come from the cup of his sorrow. Our peace comes from his anguish. We will wear crowns of life and glory because he wore a crown of thorns. As we think of what we owe to him, our love must grow deep and tender, and what can we do but serve him? It is sweet to think of his love, to receive the memorials of his sacrifice, to remember his sufferings in saving us. But that is not enough. Says Bishop Huntington: "There are two feasts, both sacramental; one at the memorial altar of the one sacrifice made once for all; the other wherever Christ and his disciples toil, suffer, die for mankind." To the one we come

with joy and gladness, as we think of the love of our Saviour for us; but let us not fail in the other, in the sacrament of service. These women, even in their deep, bewildering, overwhelming sorrow, rose up and prepared spices and ointments for the dead Christ. Shall we be less true and earnest in our love for the Christ who was dead but is now alive?

There are everywhere those who need our service—Christ's little ones, who are hungry and thirsty and cold, or who are in spiritual need. We are not to wait till they are dead and then bring flowers to their coffins. The women who brought the spices to our Lord's grave had first gone with him in his weary journeys, ministering unto him of their substance and with their hands. The world is full of sore human needs in which Christ himself suffers. For these we are to bring our spices if we would honor our Master, and we are to bring them while the need is pressing.

It is not money alone, nor chiefly, that we are called to bring. Love is better than money. Christ himself gave no money, so far as we are told; and yet never was there any other who gave so royally as he did. He gave time, strength, energy, thought, toil and love. These are the spices we must bring. They are fra-

grant to Christ. Money is needed, but money alone will never bless the world. Nothing but love will uplift men and save them. Nothing but heart's blood will heal hearts. Says George MacDonald: "It is not because of God's poverty that the world is so slowly redeemed. Not the most righteous expenditure of money alone will save it, but the expenditure of life and soul and spirit; it may be that of nerve and muscle, blood and brain. All these our Lord spent, but no money."

We cannot live a Christian life that will please Christ without cost to ourselves. It never can be an easy thing to be such disciples as he would have us to be. An easy, self-indulgent life never can be a really Christ-like life. It was not easy for Christ to redeem the world. From the beginning to the end of his earthly ministry he poured out his own precious life. The people thronged about him with their sins, their sorrows and their needs, and virtue went out of him continually to heal them, to comfort them, to feed their heart-hunger. He utterly forgot himself and gave his life and love without stint to every one who asked. At last he literally gave himself, emptying out his heart's blood to become life to dead souls. His sufferings were finished when he bowed his head on the

cross. But now it is ours to suffer for him. Nothing but the giving of life will ever save the world. It is ours, then, to perpetuate the self-sacrifice of Christ on this earth. Only in so far as we do this are we truly bringing spices to anoint him.

"Oh, sin against the love of Christ! Of all the sins that are,
Methinks that this in heaven must move the greatest sorrow far;
Must make the soul of Christ to grieve, and angels' eyes grow dim
At sight of all he does for us, and the naught we do for him."

Another way in which we may bring spices to honor Christ is in patient endurance of suffering. Christian life is not all active. Is is easier ofttimes to toil and sacrifice, even to the uttermost, than it is to be still and sweet in time of pain. Yet the perfume is very fragrant which rises from the heart that suffers and yet sings. Even amid human joy and gladness it is sweet to Christ when the odors of adoration rise from the heart. But praise when the life is in the midst of trial or sorrow is doubly precious to him. The incense in the temple gave out no perfume until it was cast upon the fire; there are many lives that do not yield the richest

sweetness of love until they are in the fires of pain. With such odors Christ is well pleased.

We should seek to honor Christ in all those experiences of our lives which are hard. You are watching by the bedside of one of your dearest friends. You pray earnestly for the sparing of the life that is so precious, but at length it seems to be God's will to take it from you. Then your duty is submission. Tears flow and the heart's pain is very sore, but there is no murmuring, no complaining. There is trust and peace. In such submission you are bringing spices and ointments to Christ.

A young man made known to his mother his decision to go out as a foreign missionary. At first, in the sudden surprise, she could not give her consent. But she carried her burden to Christ, and one morning, as she met her son, she threw her arms around him and said, "It is all settled. God has given me grace to say to you 'Go'; and I bless him for putting it into your heart to go; I adore him for giving me an Isaac to offer on his altar." When the parting came, she took off her wedding-ring in the presence of his father, and said, "This is the dearest thing I possess. I have worn it more than forty years; and now, in the expectation that I shall never see you again in this world, I give it, in

your father's presence, to you, as a token of our united love." That was strewing spices before Christ. It was honoring him by the sweet and quiet acceptance of his will, when to accept it cut into the very heart of human love.

Gentleness of temper, speech and feeling, when one is called to endure insults, wrongs or injuries, is another example of the love that honors Christ. None of us can live long in the thick of life and not sometimes be touched rudely, perhaps even cruelly, by others. How shall we endure these things that so hurt and wound us? We know what Jesus would do, what he did do in like experiences. When he was reviled, he reviled not again. There are certain flowers that emit no fragrance as they grow, but when they are crushed they give out perfume which anoints the hand that bruised them. Christ's life was ever giving out love and kindness. He met reviling with blessing. They hung him on the cross till he died, but in that cruel death he made redemption for the world. When we are wronged, or hurt, or treated unkindly, or cruelly, if we would honor our blessed Lord, we must endure with sweet forgiveness and patience.

CHAPTER VII.

The Everlasting Arms.

O great Heart of God! whose loving
Cannot hindered be nor crossed,
Will not weary, will not even
In our death itself be lost—
Love divine! of such great loving,
Only mothers know the cost—
Cost of love, which all love passing,
Gave a Son to save the lost.

Saxe Holm.

Bible words are for all ages. What God said to Moses was for him, but it is for us as well. The promises are like the stars; they shone down on Abraham, on David, on Jesus; but they shine down on us with the same light. Wherever we find a word which God gave to any of his children, even thousands of years since, we have a right to appropriate it to ourselves, just as if it were now spoken directly out of the heavens to us.

This is the true way to read the Bible—to let it speak always directly to us. Its words are like bubbling springs by life's wayside. For

ages, pilgrims have been drinking from them as they passed by. To-day, you and I come weary and thirsty, and we stoop and dip up the sweet water, as sweet to us as it was to those who first drank of it when the spring was opened. Every precious word in the Bible is for us, if we are God's children. For example, here is a word that was first spoken among the blessings wherewith Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel. But it is present tense: "Underneath are the everlasting arms;" so it is true always for every believer.

The Bible is a book of love. The heart of God beats in all its chapters. So long as sorrow, suffering, weakness and need are in the world, so long will the Bible have a welcome among men. In a thousand gentle ways does it reveal to us the affectionateness and tenderness of God. What could be more sweet and winning than the thought of the everlasting arms underneath God's child?

The words suggest the truth of the divine upholding, support and keeping. There is great comfort in this view of our relation to God. This is a large world. It is full of dangers and trials. Circumstances, not under our control, would crush us, if we had to contend with them in our own strength. None of us live

long until we learn that we cannot take care of ourselves. How comforting it is then to have such a vision as this—held in the embrace of everlasting arms! We are not fighting our own battles, unaided. We are not alone, unsheltered, unprotected, in this great world of danger. We are kept—kept by the power of God. God's omnipotence encircles us and enfolds us. The things that are too strong for us, we need not fear, for almighty arms are about us. "Underneath are the everlasting arms." Our part, then, is simple trust. The picture suggested is that of a little child, held in the strong arms of a father who is able to withstand all dangers and to shelter his child from the same.

There is a special thought here for the children. A strangely sweet Messianic promise in Isaiah reads: "He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom." The lambs cannot walk all the long, rough way, when the flock is led out to find water or pasture. They sink down in the heat, or on the steep hills. Does the shepherd then go on with his flock, and leave the fainting lambs to perish? No; he gathers them with his arms and carries them in his bosom.

One of the most beautiful things in all the Bible is the gentleness of God everywhere shown

toward the children. In the old Jewish church they were early given to God and the wings of the divine shelter were spread over them. The most minute rules were given for their instruction, that their minds might be filled with holy thoughts. In the New Testament, no picture is more beautiful than that of Jesus taking infants in his arms and blessing them.

There is a special thought here also for the old. At life's two extremes we find weakness, defencelessness. Childhood, with its innocence and inexperience, cannot care for itself. Then old age, with its infirmities, its dimness of eye, its trembling limbs, cannot stand before the roughness and under the burdens of life. But there is a promise which says: "Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." The old people need not be afraid as their infirmities multiply, and as dangers thicken. "Underneath are the everlasting arms."

God comes to us, first, in our infancy, in our mothers, who bear us in their arms. All love is of God; mother-love is likest God's of all human loves. The old Jewish rabbis used to say, "God cannot be everywhere, and therefore he made mothers." A mother's arms are under-

neath her child in its infancy. Most of us know what mother-love is. Perhaps those who have lost it know best what it is, for while we have it we cannot see all its beauty; only when it is gone, is all its preciousness revealed. Our mothers leave us after they have taught us in their own life a little of God's tenderness, but God himself remains and his arms never unclasp.

After Horace Bushnell's death, they found, dimly penciled on a sheet of paper, these words: "My mother's loving instinct was from God, and God was in her in love to me, first, therefore; which love was deeper than hers and more protracted. Long years ago she vanished, but God stays by me still, embracing me in my gray hairs as tenderly and carefully as she did in my infancy, and giving to me as my joy and the principal glory of my life, that he lets me know him and helps me, with real confidence, to call him my Father."

This thought is very beautiful. Mother-love is God's love revealing itself first to the child in tender human ways which it can understand. It could not then be made to know God's love in any other way. If God should appear, his glory would terrify the child. By and by the mother vanishes, but the lesson has been learned;

the love remains—revealed no longer in the human voice and touch and help, yet no less real, no less tender, and infinitely deeper and stronger and more lasting. The mother does her work for her child when she has taught it the love of God. Then she goes away. What mother-love is to the infant, heart-filling, satisfying, God's love is to the motherless old man who rests in the clasp of the everlasting arms.

In this world of peril, the place of the believer in Christ is in the clasp of God's love. In one of the great freshets of the West, when the wild waters spread over the valley, bearing trees and fences and crops and buildings in their floods, some men in a boat saw a baby's cradle floating amid the wreckage. Rowing to it, they found the baby dry and safe, and sleeping sweetly in its warm blankets. So, amid earth's perils and wrecks, the feeblest of God's little ones are kept, secure and unharmed, in the everlasting arms. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee."

There are some definite suggestions in the figure of an embracing arm. What does an arm represent? One thought is protection. A father puts his arm about his child when it is in danger. God protects his children. Temptations beset us on every hand. Many people think of dying

with dread, fearing to meet it. But life has far more perils than death. It is easy to die when one has lived truly; it is only entering into joy and blessedness. But it is hard to live. At every point there are perils. We need protection. Here we have it. "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." There is an invisible protection. One morning the servant of the prophet arose and looked out of the window and saw Syrian soldiers encircling the town. "Alas! my master; how shall we do?" he cried in alarm. But the prophet answered calmly, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." The servant looked out again, and lo! the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire, round about Elisha. Inside the circle of soldiers was a circle of heavenly protection. Whatever dangers beset the Christian there is an unseen defence. "Underneath are the everlasting arms."

Another suggestion is affection. The father's arm about the child means love. The child is held in the bosom, near the heart. John lay on Christ's bosom. The shepherd gathers the lambs with his arms and carries them in his bosom. This picture of God embracing his children with his arm, tells of his love for them.

It tells also of intimacy, closeness of relation. The bosom is the children's place.

There is yet a tenderer phase of the thought here, for it is especially in the time of danger or suffering that the mother carries the child in her arms. She takes it up when it has fallen and hurt itself, and comforts it by holding it in her arms. When it is sick she bears it thus and presses it to her bosom. When the minister went to baptize a sick child the mother told him it had scarcely been out of her arms for three days and nights. This is a peculiar privilege of love, therefore, for times of pain or suffering —to be held in the arms—and tells of peculiar sympathy and tenderness in our heavenly Father for his children, when they are in pain or in trouble. This is one of the blessings of suffering of which we do not always think—that it gets us the inner place of divine affection, nearest to the Father's heart. God draws us nearest when we are in trouble or in pain.

"As feeble babes that suffer,
Toss and cry and will not rest,
Are the ones the tender mother
Holds the closest, loves the best;
So when we are weak and wretched,
By our sins weighed down, distressed,
Then it is that God's great patience
Holds us closest, loves us best."

The arm is also the symbol of strength. A mother's arm may be physically frail, but love makes it strong. The arm of God is strong. It is omnipotent. It supports the worlds. When that divine arm is folded about a feeble child, all the power of the universe cannot tear it away. We know what it is, even in human friendship, to have one on whose arm we can lean with confidence. There are some people whose mere presence gives us a sense of security. We believe in them. In their quiet peace there is strength which imparts something of itself to all who come near them. Every true human friend is more or less a strength to us. Yet the finest, securest human strength is only a little fragment of the divine strength. This is omnipotence. "In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." There is an arm that never can be broken, and out of its clasp we never can be torn.

Another thought in the everlasting arm is endurance. There might be protection, affection and strength, and yet the blessings might not last. We have all these in human love, but human arms grow weary, even in love's embrace. They cannot long press the child to the bosom. Here is a man whose arm is paralyzed and hangs powerless by his side. No more can that arm

wind itself about the feebleness which it has so long and with such gentleness embraced. But the arms of God are everlasting. They shall never grow weary. It is everlastingness that is the highest blessedness of divine affection and care.

A young man stood by the coffin of his beloved wife, after only one short year of wedded happiness. It was very, very sweet,—the clasp of that love, but, oh, how brief a time it lasted, and how desolate now was the life that had lost the precious companionship! A little baby, two weeks old, was left motherless. The mother clasped her baby to her breast and drew her feeble arms about it in one long, loving embrace; but the child will nevermore have a mother's arms about it, for even God cannot twice give a mother. So pathetic is human life, with its broken affections, its little moments of loving, followed by separation, its winding of arms around the life only to be torn away in an hour. But here is something that lasts, that knows no separation, that never unclasps. The arms of God are everlasting. Neither death nor life can separate. The mountains shall depart, crumble, vanish, but God's kindness shall never depart from his child.

There is a very sacred thought in the word

"underneath." A father tried to save his child in the waves, clasping his arms about the loved form. But the arms were too weak and the child slipped from them, sank away in the dark waters and perished. But the arms of God are underneath his children and no one can sink out of their embrace. These arms are always underneath. The waves of sorrow are very deep, but still and forever, underneath the deepest floods are the everlasting arms. We cannot sink below them. If we lie down in sickness, the everlasting arms are underneath us. If human friendships are stripped off and we stand alone in our bereavement, still we are not alone. He who changes not abides with us. Underneath are the everlasting arms. God remains and God suffices. Then, when death comes and every earthly thing is gone from beneath us and every hand unclasps from ours and every face of love fades from our eyes, and we sink away into what seems darkness and the shadow of death, it will be only into the everlasting arms. When Jesus was dying, he said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." He found no darkness, no loneliness,—only the everlasting arms. That is what dying is to every believer in Christ—out of the earth's weariness into the bosom of Christ.

The Everlasting Arms

We need to train ourselves to trust God unwaveringly. Yet it is here that so many are weak. They are not sure of their trust in Christ, and therefore they are easily alarmed. Trouble dismays them. Their peace is broken with small cares and trials. They have little zeal in Christian work. They are easily discouraged. Their religion is a matter of temperature, rising and falling like the mercury. They begin things and drop them. Their praying is fitful. Their good resolves are like summer blossoms which fall off when the first frost comes.

If our minds were stayed on Christ, we should have perfect peace. If we realized that the eternal God is our refuge, and that the everlasting arms are truly underneath us, our joy would not fluctuate as it does, nor our zeal be so fitful. The revival we need is a closer relation with Christ, a deeper repose in him, a more trustful settling down upon him and upon his atoning work. Then nothing could disturb our confidence, chill our ardor, or hinder our consecration. Then in sorrow we should rejoice, in temptation we should be victorious, in all life we should be strong.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Disciple Jesus Loved.

Our lives they are well worth the living,
  When we lose our small selves in the whole,
And feel the strong surges of being
  Throb through us, one heart and one soul.
Eternity bears up each honest endeavor;
The life lost for love is life saved, and forever.

Lucy Larcom.

One of the most tender pictures in the gospel is that which shows us one of Christ's disciples leaning on the Master's breast. No name is given. We are told that it was the disciple "whom Jesus loved." We know then who it was. In all the Gospel written by John he does not once mention his own name, but the book shines from beginning to end with the splendor of the person of Christ. He glorified the Master and hid himself. While we insist on writing our own name on every little picture of Christ we paint, and projecting our own personality into all our Christian work, demanding recognition, honor and credit for ourselves, we cannot worthily honor our Master. Like John we

should write gospels which shall show forth the glorious honor of Christ, his sweet beauty, his gentle love, in which we shall nowhere inscribe so much as our initials.

There is another thought here, with a lesson. This disciple, who nowhere wrote his own name on any page of his Gospel, spoke of himself again and again by the designation: "The disciple whom Jesus loved." He did not say "The disciple who loved Jesus." His hope lay not in his love for Christ, but in Christ's love for him. This is the central principle of divine grace. We find it in such words as these: "Not that we loved God, but that he loved us;" "We love him, because he first loved us;" "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." It is never our love for Christ that saves us, but always Christ's love for us.

In John leaning on Jesus' bosom, we have a type of all true Christian faith. Look at the little child lying on the mother's bosom. It has no fears, no anxieties, no questionings. It nestles in the place of love, feels the strong arm encircle it and has not a care. Thus ought we to learn to lie in the bosom of Christ.

No lesson is taught in the Scriptures more repeatedly than the duty and privilege of trusting in Christ. We are taught that we are taken

care of in this world, more constantly, kept more securely, than the most favored child on earth can be taken care of, or kept, in the securest, most loving home. We are taught to be anxious for nothing. There are many needs and trials, but "your Father knoweth." There are sorrows and losses, but "all things work together for good." This great, wild, turbulent, wicked world seems to be a perilous place for Christ's little ones to live in; but every one of them is kept and carried in Christ's bosom. It is Jesus himself who tells us that the strongest and most honored angels are set to guard the children, and that they are always admitted to the presence of the Father in heaven. His words bring before us this picture—beside each little one of Christ an angel guardianship which makes the feeblest of them all as safe, even in this world, as if they were already in heaven.

So in all this world's wild turbulence, amid its enmities, its temptations, its trials and sorrows, its wants and dangers, its strifes and conflicts, every child of God may be kept in perfect peace. Wherever he is, whatever his circumstances or his condition, he is really lying on the bosom of Jesus. We should learn not to be afraid in life's wildest storms. Though all earthly things are torn from our clasp and all

earthly refuges are swept away, leaving us in the midst of dangers unprotected, unsheltered, still God is our refuge, and still do we lie in the bosom of divine love. No earthly walls can ever make such a secure dwelling-place as is the bosom of the Almighty.

When was it that John leaned on the Master's bosom? It was not on one of the bright days of John's discipleship. Even then the picture would have been beautiful, teaching us its sweet lessons of love and communion. But it was not at any such time as this. It was on the last night of our Lord's life, a time of great darkness, of strange, bewildering fear, of sore alarm and danger. Never did deeper night hang around human hearts on earth than hung that night about the hearts of Christ's friends. Yet where was John? Lying on the bosom of Jesus.

What is the lesson? There may come to any of us, amid the swift and sudden changes of time, an hour of darkness, of alarm, of sorrow. Where shall we then go? We cannot understand the meaning of the strange events that bring such desolation or such bewilderment, but for that very reason the best thing we can do is to lie down on the bosom of Christ and leave in his hands all the strange questions, all the perplexity. He knows; he understands.

If we turn to him in our times of darkness we shall always find light, for it is never dark where he is. Even a strong human friend is a refuge in time of trouble; much more, in the secret of the presence of Christ, shall we find peace in the time of earthly dismay.

Where was it that John leaned? It was on the bosom of Jesus. He did not merely put his hand into his Master's. The hand is the symbol of guidance, upholding, help. It is good to be held by the hand of the strong Son of God. John did not lean merely on the arm of Christ. The arm means strength, upbearing, protection, security. It is a blessed comfort to have the everlasting arm underneath us. John leaned on the Lord's bosom. He lay close to his heart. The bosom is the place of shelter. It is also the place of love. The Good Shepherd carries the lambs in his bosom. It is a great comfort to have the power of Christ for our help, our security, our refuge; but it is infinitely better to have the love of Christ for our hiding-place, our shelter. To lie on the bosom of Jesus is to be wrapped in the precious folds of love. A mother's bosom is for her child the softest place in all this world; but the bosom of Jesus is infinitely softer and warmer.

What did John do? He leaned on Jesus'

bosom. The word "leaned" is very suggestive. Perhaps we miss something of the full, rich meaning of our privilege, in this regard, as believers in Christ. We understand that we may cast our burdens on Christ, that the loads which are too heavy for us to carry he will help us carry. We speak of bearing Christ's yoke, and we like to think that he walks beside us and helps us, as our divine yoke-fellow. Then we go further and think of him bearing our sins. The load that would sink our souls to the depths of eternal despair, we may lay on Jesus, the Lamb of God.

But even this is not all that is implied in leaning upon Jesus' bosom. John left all his care in his Master's hands that night. The hopes that seemed crushed now—his bitter disappointment—he laid down in the bosom of heavenly love. But as we look at the picture we see that the beloved disciple leaned his own weight upon Jesus—not only the burden of his sorrow, his perplexity, and his loss did he lay on Jesus—but himself. A friend was moving his library, and his little boy was helping him carry his books upstairs. The child had gathered his arms full and had gone off proudly with his load. Presently, however, the father heard a call for help. The little fellow had

gotten half-way up the stairs when the burden proved too heavy, and he sank down. He wanted his father to come and take part of the books. The father heard the call, and, coming up the stairs, he lifted and carried both the boy and his load. Thus it is that Christ carries us and all our burdens. There is nothing in all our life that he does not assume when he becomes our friend. He takes our sins and puts them away. He takes our wicked heart and changes it. He takes our sinful life and restores it. He takes our mistakes and sins and corrects them. He takes into his hand the guidance of our life, the ordering of our steps, the shaping of our circumstances, the ruling and overruling of the events of our days, our deliverance in temptation. When we give ourselves to Christ, we really have nothing whatever to do with our own life, but our simple duty, day by day, hour by hour. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" is our one duty, and "all these things shall be added unto you" is the divine part.

This picture suggests to us the secret of a beautiful life. Artists in their pictures paint John the most like Jesus of any of the apostles. There is no doubt that he was the most beloved of all because he was the most lovable of all.

His Gospel and Epistles breathe the spirit of a most sweet and gentle character. Yet there are indications that it was not always so; that originally he was fiery, vehement, resentful. Once he desired to call down fire from heaven to burn up a village and destroy its inhabitants because they had refused to entertain Jesus. This was not the spirit of love which we find in him later. He had to learn the lesson of love.

Dr. Culross compares the character of John, in its mellow ripeness, to an ancient, extinct volcano. Where once the crater yawned, there is now a verdurous, cup-like hollow in the mountain summit. Where once the fierce fire burned, lies a still, clear pool of water, looking up like an eye to the beautiful heavens above, its banks covered with sweet flowers. "It is an apt parable of this man. Naturally and originally volcanic, capable of profoundest passion and daring, he is new-made by grace, till, in his old age, he stands out in calm grandeur of character and depth and largeness of soul, with all the gentlenesses and graces of Christ adorning him—a man, as I imagine him to myself, with a face so noble that kings might do him homage, and so sweet that little children would run to him for his blessing."

What was it that wrought this transformation

in John? What was it that subdued the spirit of resentment in him to the gentleness of love? What was it that made the "son of thunder" into the apostle of Christly affectionateness? It was lying upon the Master's bosom that did it. The lump of common clay lay on the perfumed rose and the sweetness of the rose entered into it, permeating it with its own fragrance.

There is room on that same bosom of eternal love for all who will claim the place. How can we find the place? We are in Christ's bosom when we have a confiding trust in him, when we believe in his love for us, and let it flow about us in all its tenderness, loving him in return. We rest in that bosom when we grow intimate with Jesus, cultivating close fellowship and companionship, forming with him a real heart to heart friendship, until we know no other friend so well, and love no other friend so much. We may come into this holy privilege, living always near the heart of Christ. Then the effect on our life of such habitual reposing on him will be the transformation of our character into the gentle beauty of holy love. Lying on the bosom of Christ, we shall grow like Christ. His life and love shall flow into our heart and saturate all our being, filling us with the very life of Christ himself.

There is another look at this picture which we must take before we turn away from it. This time it gives us a glimpse of what heaven will be. The ancient Jews called the home of the blessed dead, Abraham's bosom. This was because Abraham was the father of the Jewish people, and the children were all gathered into the father's bosom. In a far sweeter, truer sense may we speak of heaven as the bosom of Christ. It is the place of perfect communion. Nothing will ever separate the believer from his Saviour in that home of glory.

We see, too, what death is to a Christian—only going up closer in the bosom in which he has lain here on earth. Should any one be afraid to creep up into this gentle place? Stephen, dying, saw Jesus, and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." St. Paul said, "To me to die is gain." Dying is gain to a Christian because it is departing to be with Christ. Let us not dread to leave this world, if we are indeed Christ's. It will be only changing dim faith for sight, the Friend whom not having seen we love, into face to face with him forever.

There is room on that bosom for many more. It is never full, for the arms of Christ are stretched out to take in the whole world. No one is shut out.

"No father's house is full,
E'en though there seems no resting-place for more;
Forgiving arms and doors do open wide
If one repentant child implore
Outside.

No mother's heart is full,
Unless it be with longing, burning, wild
Heart-throbbings that no cheerful face can hide,
The wish to clasp her sinning child
Outside."

And Christ's bosom is never full. There is room for the penitent; room for the wanderer who wants to return; room for the sorrowing who seek soothing and comfort; room for the old in their feebleness; room for the children, room for all.

CHAPTER IX.

Great in God's Sight.

Earth needs the true.
The soul whose loyal purpose is its king,
Whose every thought like solid gold doth ring,
Whose diamond purity shows not a flaw,
Whose liberty exults in serving law,
Which knows no yoke of servile hope or fear,
In which no sordid greed doth e'er appear,
Which is not warped by vanity or pride,
Which, loving God, seeks no reward beside.
To show God's mind, earth needs the true.

Llewellyn J. Evans.

Few men have had higher honor than that which was conferred upon John the Baptist, in Christ's estimate of him. "Among them that are born of woman there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist," were the strong words that fell from the lips of the Master. It was a great thing to have our Lord speak such praise. He knew what was in men, and he never spoke an insincere word. Human estimates of greatness are ofttimes defective, sometimes false. Men see only the outward appear-

ance. Many people are not so great as they seem to be. They practice tricks which deceive the world. They pass for great while in reality they are very small. Strip off their gaudy tinsel, and but little would be left.

Other people, however, are greater than they seem. They lack the popular qualities which attract attention and win applause. Yet they are great in their souls—great in intellectual qualities, in heart power, in the elements of true manhood, in moral strength. But there is an eye that sees all things as they are. It pierces all thin disguises, penetrates to the core of things, and discerns the poor shrivelled soul that is hidden beneath the external glitter. On the other hand, it sees in the lowly life, which gets but little praise of men, whose outer form is homely and plain, the true worth, the qualities which are excellent, the character which bears the marks of divinity.

It is well that we sometimes stop to think how we appear to God—what God thinks of us. Goethe says: "There is something in every man's heart, which, if we could know, would make us hate him." Perhaps this is true, but it is true also that there is something in every man, in even the most repulsive man, which, if we could know, would make us love him. As

Great in God's Sight

God sees us, we are both worse and better than we seem to any other eyes in all the world. He sees the hidden faults and the secret stains; he sees also the feeble yearnings which at length will be splendid spiritual qualities.

The artist's picture is born in his brain. At first it is only a vision, but by and by it stands on the canvas and thousands admire it. There are in every true heart noble dreams of beautiful character—only dreams yet, faint visions, shadowy aspirations and longings. These will all at length be realized, and will stand on the canvas of the life as attainments. I love to think of this side of the lives of my fellows—not the poor, stained fragments of being which my eyes now see, but what they will be when God's work of grace in them is finished. We are all greater in the possibilities of our lives than we dream of.

What were some of the elements in John which led Jesus to speak this wonderful commendation of him? It is well that we should know, for a character so highly praised of the Christ we may well study as a pattern for our imitation.

John was great in his birth. A singular glory hung over his cradle. An angel came to the good priest as he ministered at the altar, an-

nouncing to him that a child should be born in his home, whom he should call John, who should bring to his father joy and gladness. "He shall be great in the sight of the Lord," said the angel. But few men have been thus honored before their birth by angelic pre-announcement of their greatness.

John was great also in his place among the prophets. He was the immediate forerunner of Christ. There was a long succession of holy men before John, all of whom foretold the Messiah. Abraham saw his day, but it was then two thousand years off. Moses foretold the coming of Christ, as that greater prophet like unto him, whom the Lord should send. David sang of the glory of his greater Son, who should sit upon his throne forever. Isaiah uttered sublime prophecies of the Messiah who should come to bring deliverance; whose name should be Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace; who should bear his people's sins and carry their sorrows, by whose stripes they should be healed. Zechariah foretold the place of the Messiah's birth,—the little town of Bethlehem,—which should be made great in the land, henceforth, by this wonderful event. Malachi, last of the line of prophets before John, spoke

of the Lord coming suddenly to his temple, and sitting as a refiner and purifier of silver.

All of these were great men, highly honored in the line of the heralds and prophets of Messiah. But John was greater than any of them, because he was the immediate forerunner of the Christ. It was his privilege to go into the wilderness and to call the people to prepare for the appearance of the Messiah, who even then was among them, though unrecognized, and who was about to make himself known to them. It was his privilege to go close before the Messiah's face, and make ready the path for his feet. It was his privilege, one wonderful day, beside the Jordan, to baptize a young man, on whom the Holy Spirit then descended in bodily form, like a dove, over whom the heavens were opened, revealing a glimpse of glory, and of whom a divine voice declared, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." It was John's privilege to introduce the Messiah to the people as the Lamb of God, and to testify to all men concerning his glory and greatness. Thus John held the highest place in the glorious line of prophets. He was the morning star which heralded the sun.

John was great also as a preacher. His training was peculiar. He did not attend the schools

as other teachers did. He went away into the wilderness. He lived as a hermit. He wore a sheepskin mantle. His hair and beard were never cut, for he was a Nazarite. He ate for his food locusts and wild honey. Thus he lived in the desert, apart from men. God was his only teacher. In his heart the great truths of divine teaching burned. At length he came forth from his seclusion and began to preach. For four hundred years, since the days of Malachi, no prophet's voice had been heard speaking to men from God. The people were now startled in their spiritual slumber by the unwonted tones which fell upon their ears. No man had ever spoken as this strange man from the desert spoke. He told them of their sins. He said the Messiah was coming, and that he was sent to prepare the way before him. He called them to repent, to put away the evil out of their lives, to turn their hearts to God for forgiveness, that they might be ready to receive their coming King.

John's public work was short. The time was counted in months, but he crowded into the brief period an intensity of life and utterance that changed the moral history of the world. Life is not measured by the number of its years, but by what one puts into the years. One day of intense living, full of the Holy Spirit, burn-

ing with love, is better than a whole year of such mild, indolent, lukewarm living as too many of us give to the world. A young man may die at three and thirty, as John did, as also did Jesus, and yet leave impressions on the world's life which shall make all the human story of after years mean more.

John was great also as a man. He was great intellectually. His rugged strength made him tower majestically above the men of his day. To be a great preacher, one must first be a great man, great in all the elements which belong to true manliness. Words amount to little unless there is a noble soul behind them. It is character that gives force to what a man says. It is character that impresses the world. It is what a man is that makes his atmosphere, that breathes out in that mysterious impartation of life which we call influence. John's character was great.

Look at his courage. He stood before the throngs, in which were the most learned and the most powerful of his people, and told them of their sins. He did not do it, either, in delicate and decorous phrases, but in baldest, plainest speech. A little later, when Herod had committed a grievous offence against purity and against the sacredness of marriage and the home, it was

John who met him with denunciation of his sin. John knew well what he was doing. He knew the bad heart of Herod and the wicked fury of the woman who was sharer in Herod's sin. But he faltered not in his faithfulness as a preacher of truth. It cost him sorely. He was cast into a dungeon in the "Black Fortress," where he lay in gloom and chains. By and by his life was taken from him to gratify the vengeance of the woman whose dishonor he had so faithfully condemned.

All this was the cost and consequence of his fidelity. But he was never sorry for being fearless and true. He never regretted that he had lifted up his voice for righteousness. It is by such fidelities that the cause of truth is advanced in the world. No matter that they cost so much, that noble lives perish in being true; the result is worth the price paid. It seemed, indeed, a fearful price to pay—the quenching of this great light, the brutal slaughter of this noble man, the cutting off of this useful life in its very prime, the untimely ending of this worthy career in blood—all as the consequence of one faithful word spoken against sin,—spoken in vain, too, as it seemed, for apparently the reproof did no good. "What a waste!" we are apt to say. No, it was not a waste. Herod

and Herodias lived on in their sinful relation as if John had not spoken. But John's testimony made the moral atmosphere of the world a little purer. The shedding of John's blood in the dungeon enriched the soil of the earth. John's faithful testimony was not lost, but became part of the great spiritual force of the world. John's life was not wasted, though ending in such a tragic way; his spirit lives in the world's life; his soul is marching on.

Another fine thing in John's character was his utter self-forgetfulness. In his great popularity the people began to think that he was the Messiah. They came to him, asking him if he were not. A weak and unscrupulous man would have accepted the homage. But John instantly put it away. "Oh, no," he said; "I am not the Christ. I am only a voice crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord.'" Thus he hid himself out of sight and put honor upon the Messiah who was to come.

All through his ministry it was the same. When Jesus came and began to preach, the crowds melted away from about John and flocked to hear the Galilean peasant, whose gracious words were such music in their ears. Was it easy for John to bear this waning of his own power and popularity, in the more winning

attractiveness of the new preacher? It was very hard, but John's noble spirit endured the test. When his disciples said to him, "Teacher, he to whom thou barest witness is preaching, and all the people are going after him," his answer was most beautiful: Ye yourselves remember that I said, "I am not the Christ, but only one sent before him. I am the bridegroom's friend. My joy is fulfilled in seeing him honored. He must increase, but I must decrease."

It is hard, when one has been first, to take a second place. It is hard, when one has been the centre of attraction for a time in any circle, and when another comes in and takes the favored place, for the former to yield gracefully and keep sweet. It is hard, when one has led for a time in some important work, to step down into obscurity and yet continue to work there as faithfully and earnestly as before, while another fills the old place. Few tests of character are sorer than this. The man who will do his work only when he is in a prominent position, and who will sulk if asked to work in an obscure place, lacks one element of the finest manliness.

It has been said that the hardest instrument to play in all the orchestra is the second violin. Yet somebody must play it, and he must be a good player, too. The hardest places to fill in

all the relations of life are the second places; yet they must be filled, and well filled, too, with those who can do beautiful work. Blessed are those who will do their duty and do it well and sweetly wherever they may be appointed to stand. We are working for God's eye, and the most conspicuous workers, as he sees them, are those who do their part the most conscientiously and the most cheerfully, even without praise or recognition. Jesus said that those who serve the best are greatest in his kingdom.

Having spoken with such unstinted praise of John, Jesus said further, "Yet he that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." Evidently, he did not mean that in all the elements of greatness the weakest Christian is superior to the Baptist. He was speaking of the two dispensations. John was greatest in the old. But Christ, by his life, teachings, death and resurrection, lifted humanity to a loftier height than it had ever held before. He revealed the love of God, the fatherhood of God, and the privilege of divine childship, for every penitent soul. The least in the kingdom of heaven is sharer in all heaven's blessedness. We do not realize what exaltation the grace of Christ brings to a Christian. Wonderful are the possibilities of life in Christ. If we only

understood how great we may become, it would fire our souls with zeal and earnestness and impel us to grandest, loftiest flights.

A recent writer puts solemn truths in the form of a dream. He dreamed that he died and a spirit guide led him toward the bar of God. He saw before him what seemed the form of a man, having marvelous beauty, grace and strength. In every feature, nobleness and worth were traced. His guide asked him who he thought it was. "Jesus," he answered, almost overcome with awe. "No," said the guide; "not Jesus, but thyself." "Myself!" he replied, thinking his guide was only trifling. "Yes," said the guide, "thyself; what thou mightest have been, if thou hadst always obeyed the still small voice."

Then he saw spread out before him a panorama of his life, showing him every point at which he had chosen the wrong way. He saw what he had missed and how he had missed it. Here was what he might have been.

The next night he dreamed again. Again he was led into the divine presence and a form appeared, but oh, how different from the one he had seen the night before! All that was evil seemed to live in the features. He hated and loathed the wretch as his enemy. "Who

is it?" asked the guide. "Satan," he answered —"Satan, the father of lies, the prince of all evil." "Nay," cried the guide; "it is thyself." He was indignant. "Yes; it is thyself —what thou shalt be, that toward which thou art tending." Again all his life swept before him and he saw the end, the culmination, the ripeness, of all the selfish and wrong choices he had made, of all the bad feelings, appetites and passions he had cherished. It was a vision of what a sinful life will come to at the last.

Before each human life are these two same possibilities, as far apart as heaven and hell. In Christ we may grow into all strength, nobleness and beauty; if we live apart from Christ, we shall see ourselves at last hideous in all sin's awful fruitage: saint, wearing Christ's image, all the nobleness of true manhood, all the beauty of holiness; or demon, bearing the outworking of all vileness and unholiness.

Behold that form of radiant loveliness that rises before you as you think of Jesus. All nobleness is in the features. All manly qualities shine in the character. How beautiful, how radiant is the life! Who is it? It is yourself—what you may become in Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER X.

Possibilities of Friendship.

We live together years and years,
  And leave unsounded still
Each other's springs of hopes and fears,
  Each other's depths of will;
We live together day by day,
  And some chance look or tone
Lights up with instantaneous ray
  An inner world unknown.

Houghton.

The subject of friendship never wears out. Human hearts are the same in all ages. We all need love. There is a story of a captive in the Bastile, long immured in a lonely dungeon, whose heart, craving friendship in some form, found it in a little spider which was in his cell. Even Jesus felt the need of human friendship, his heart reaching out for sympathy and companionship. There is no one who does not need friends. The busier one is, the more one is living for others, the richer, deeper and purer one's life is, the more does one need a friend, or a few friends, in whose shelter to rest,

from whose sympathy to draw strength and renewal. Friendship is one of the earliest cravings of the new-born life, and one of the latest to die; infancy and old age alike hunger for love.

"I watched a youth and maiden by the sea:
The white foam dashed upon the rocks in spray,
As sportive as fair children at their play:
It kissed her cheek and brow, from care as free
As birds in summer: smiling tenderly,
He took her hand in his in manly way.
The picture lingered with me many a day;
'Youth is the time of love,' it said to me.

I watched them later, when the youth had grown
To man's estate, and little ones were led
By gentle hands. Her face with gladness shone.
'Ah! manhood is the time to love,' I said.
Sweet love! without thee age itself were lone;
Life and eternity by love are wed."

It is important that the friends we have shall be true and worthy. It is better to live in solitariness all one's days than to take into one's life a friend who is not good, whose influence will mar and soil one's purity of soul.

There are many helpful hints in the beautiful friendship of Jonathan for David for those who are choosing friends.

It was a disinterested friendship. Jonathan

was the king's son. What could the shepherd-boy do for the prince? What advantage could come to Jonathan from having this country lad for a friend? Jonathan was rich, high in rank, and older than David. There was no possible benefit that might come to him from having the ruddy youth for a friend. Had it been David who desired to make Jonathan his friend, it would not have seemed such a disinterested affection, for the king's son might be of great advantage to the ambitious shepherd-boy. As it was, however, the friendship was entirely unselfish and disinterested. Jonathan loved David for David's own sake. His eyes saw in the blushing lad beauty, nobleness, excellency of character, true bravery of soul, the elements of fine manhood, the germs of all those traits which, later in the story, shine out in such splendor in David.

Disinterestedness is a quality of all true friendship. There are many people who will be your friends when they see some advantage in it for themselves. They cling to you with intense devotion when you can give them pleasure, help them toward the achieving of their ambition, or be of advantage to them in some way. This is the world's friendship. It seeks, not you, but yours. It is very sad to see one deceived by

such friendship, giving the trusting love and confidence of a loyal heart into the icy clutches of such unworthy selfishness.

If you would have a friendship that will never fail you, that will be true through all dark hours, that will come only the nearer to you in adversity, seek for a friend who cares for you for yourself, whose friendship is disinterested and unselfish.

Jonathan's friendship was faithful. It would not have seemed strange that in the moment of David's victory Jonathan admired him and was drawn to him. Generous natures are always charmed by noble deeds in others. Many sudden friendships, however, are short-lived. Many young people form attachments of this sort, which unclasp amid the toils, struggles, ambitions, hardships and trials of real life. It was the glory of Jonathan's friendship for David that it stood the test of most trying experiences. It soon became apparent that David was the nation's idol. The people sang:

> "Saul hath slain his thousands
> And David his ten thousands."

It was this that turned Saul's friendship for David to bitter hate. But Jonathan's friendship stood the test. He was willing to see his friend

exalted to honor though that honor eclipsed himself. Soon Jonathan knew that the friend he had taken to his heart was to sit on the throne that was his by right of succession. Yet even this did not affect the friendship of his loyal heart. He loved David so that he rejoiced in David's exaltation over himself. "Thou shalt be king, and I shall be next unto thee," he said, with loving pride. He knew that David had never sought the crown, but that it was by God's will that it was to be his; and he bowed in submission and was glad. The world has never shown anything, even in friendship, finer than this.

There was another test. Enemies of David sought by misrepresentation and calumnies to destroy Jonathan's regard for him. Saul himself darkly hinted that there was treachery in David toward Jonathan. Yet even these calumnies did not start in Jonathan's mind a shadow of doubt concerning David. On the other hand, he bravely defended his friend in his absence. He sought to conciliate his father, assuring him of David's sincerity, recounting his noble deeds. He even imperilled his own life in pleading with his father for his friend. Thus in all its testings Jonathan's friendship was proved constant.

Jonathan's friendship was helpful. There is friendship that is fine in sentiment, lavish in compliment, profuse in words, but that never proves its sincerity by real helpfulness. Jonathan showed his friendship for David in many practical ways. He defended him in his absence. He secured his escape from Saul's plot. He helped him in his lonely exile, by faithfulness, by encouragement, by personal kindness.

Helpfulness belongs to all true friendship. Its central desire is not to get, but to give; not to be ministered unto, but to minister. Friendship can be formed on no other basis. Ordinarily it is in little ways that friendship's richest help is given. There may come times when it will cost most deeply to be a friend. Misfortune knows no rank, and the most prosperous may be in straits through which only munificent help can carry them, and then friendship must not fail, whatever the cost may be. For the greater part, however, the help we need from our friends is not money, not anything that costs much. We are not suitors for charity. We do not want our friends to carry our burdens for us, unless we are actually fainting under them. No noble person wants a friend to do for him that which he can do for himself.

But we all need and crave sympathy, human

kindness, cheer, fellowship, as we go along life's dusty road. This small coin of love is the brightener of every life that is blessed by a rich friendship.

Another thing about this friendship was that it had a religious basis. Both of these men loved God, and believed in him. Three different times they made solemn covenant together, appealing to God to ratify their covenant. Friendships should always be knit with a threefold cord—two human hearts and God. True friendship binds hearts and lives together in virtue, in purity, in honesty, in godliness. When a professed friend wants you to join him in sin, flee from him. Young people should seek as their friends those who love God and follow Christ, those whom they will want beside them when they are dying. We should choose friends whom we can take into every part of our life, into every closest communion, into every holy joy, into all consecration and service, into every hope, and between whom and us there shall never be a point at which we shall not be in sympathy. We are too apt to let our friendships be dependent on the drift of life about us. We keep open door, like the street-car, to give hospitality to all who come. We do not always choose our friends. This is

not dealing justly with ourselves. We must be courteous to every one we meet; but we may not make every neighbor a friend. Jesus prayed all night before he chose his twelve. We should never make a friendship over which we have not prayed. We ought to accept only the friendships that will bring blessing to our life, that will enrich our character, that will stimulate us to better and holier things, that will weave threads of silver and gold into our web of life, and whose every influence upon us will be a lasting benediction.

"Thy friend will come to thee unsought;
With nothing can his love be bought;
His soul thine own will know at sight;
With him thy heart can speak outright.
Greet him nobly; love him well;
Show him where thy best thoughts dwell;
Trust him greatly and for aye:
A true friend comes but once thy way."

There is a holy, invigorating, stimulating influence, like an atmosphere, that belongs to every true friendship. It is harder to do wrong and easier to do right, when we have a friend who believes in us and expects beautiful things of us. A pure, rich friendship is like warm spring sunshine, as its glances fall upon our life. Whatever possibilities of good there are in our life

are encouraged and drawn out by the nourishing warmth of a rich and worthy friendship. There are noble and beautiful lives which owe all they are to a pure, inspiring friendship. Comrades discovered a picture of a fair face in the pocket of a young soldier, whom they found dead on the front line of the advance. Then they knew the secret of his bravery.

"What is the secret of your life?" asked Mrs. Browning of Charles Kingsley. "Tell me, that I may make mine beautiful, too." His reply was, "I had a friend." She who came into his life in early youth as wife and friend, by the impact of her noble soul on his, inspired and built up in him a manhood than which none more royal ever grew on this earth. Let the woman who accepts the holy place of wife learn what power is hers, what she may do for the man who has chosen her from among all women, if only she rises to the full dignity and glory of her privilege.

True friendship is immortal. The friend may go away out of your sight, but does not, cannot, go out of your life. You may be separated by continents or by oceans, but your friend is with you so long as loyal affection dwells in your heart. Every memory of him is precious, and stirs its own proper emotion.

Even death does not take him out of your life. It is a strange power that death has. It sweeps away the faults and blemishes and brings out the shy beauties, the half-forgotten tendernesses, the hitherto unrecognized loveliness, and we see our friend now at his best, his true self, no longer in the dim light of human passion, but in the warm glow of love. Many a time our friends are more to us when they have gone from us into heaven than ever they were when they walked with us in the midst of earth's strifes, competitions, envyings and rivalries. Their influence over us abides perpetually. The impressions they made upon us when they were with us stay for ever as part of our character. Everything they ever touched is sacred.

"Where thou hast touched, O wondrous death!
Where thou hast come between,
Lo, there forever perisheth
The common and the mean.

No little flaw or trivial speck
Doth any more appear,
And cannot, from this time, to fleck
Love's perfect image clear.

Clear stands love's perfect image now,
And shall do evermore;
And we in awe and wonder bow
The glorified before."

One tells how he saw in the private treasury of Windsor Castle a great gold peacock sparkling with rubies, emeralds and diamonds, which had been brought away from some rajah's palace; and close by it a common quill pen and a bit of serge discolored. The pen had signed some important treaty; the bit of serge was the fragment of a flag that had waved over some hard-fought field. The two together were worth a half-penny, but they held their ground beside the jewels; for they meant successful effort and heroic devotion for the interests of the kingdom, and therefore were laid up in the treasure-house of royalty. So it is with the holy and sacred mementos of friendship. You may have things of great money value in your house; but if there is an old letter, a book, or a flower which the dead hand plucked, or some most trifling thing that belonged to the friend now in heaven, it is easy to tell what, in the list of your treasures, you prize most highly.

We can never lose a friend. His touches on our life will never fade out. His words will stay always in our heart. The impressions he made upon us will never be effaced. When he came into our life and the friendship grew up between him and us, the threads of his being became inextricably entangled with the threads

of our being, and they never more can be disentangled. The bonds of friendship are inalienable. Lucy Larcom writes:

What is the best a friend can be
To any soul, to you or me?
Not only shelter, comfort, rest—
Inmost refreshment unexpressed;
Not only a beloved guide
To tread life's labyrinth at our side,
Or with love's torch lead on before;
Though these be much, there yet is more.

The best friend is an atmosphere
Warm with all inspirations dear,
Wherein we breathe the large, free breath
Of life that hath no taint of death.
Our friend is an unconscious part
Of every true beat of our heart;
A strength, a growth, whence we derive
God's health, that keeps the world alive.

The best friend is horizon, too,
Lifting unseen things into view,
And widening every petty claim
Till lost in some sublimer aim;
Blending all barriers in the great
Infinities that round us wait.
Friendship is an eternity
Where soul with soul walks, heavenly free.

Can friend lose friend? Believe it not.
The tissue whereof life is wrought,

Weaving the separate into one,
Nor end hath, nor beginning; spun
From subtle threads of destiny,
Finer than thought of man can see.
God takes not back his gifts divine;
While thy soul lives, thy friend is thine.

If but one friend have crossed thy way,
Once only, in thy mortal day;
If only once life's best surprise
Have opened on thy human eyes,
Ingrate thou wert, indeed, if thou
Didst not in that rare presence bow;
And on earth's holy ground, unshod,
Speak softlier the dear name of God.

CHAPTER XI.

Praying for Our Friends.

"Yes, pray for whom thou lovest; if uncounted wealth were thine,
The treasures of the boundless deep, the riches of the mine,
Thou couldst not to thy cherished friends a gift so dear impart
As the earnest benediction of a deeply prayerful heart."

It is good to pray for one's friends. Indeed, the friendship that does not pray is lacking in one of its most sacred elements. We have also a good index of the character of the friendship in the things that one asks for one's friends. To seek for them only earthly blessings is to miss friendship's highest privilege, which is to call down heaven's benedictions upon them.

It is interesting to study St. Paul's prayers for his friends. His prayer for the Philippians may be taken as an example. He does not ask that they may have more of this world's good things, that they may be prospered in business, but he asks for them those things that will enrich their spiritual life and character.

He asks that their love may abound yet more and more. Without love there is no Christian life. To live truly at all is to love. Love is perfect tense of live,—at least, spiritually, if not grammatically. No one can be a Christian and not have love. In all the cordage of the British naval service there is a red thread twisted, which cannot be taken out without undoing the whole. Wherever, in any part of the world, even a fragment of British cordage is found, it has this mark—the red thread. So Christian character, wherever found, in whatsoever country, has in it the red cord of love. Not to have love is not to be a Christian. All Christian duty is summed up in loving—loving God and our neighbor.

The prayer of St. Paul is that this love may abound yet more and more. It is not enough to have a little love in the heart, a feeble, trickling spring, bubbling up, and sending out tiny rills and streamlets of affection. Love in us should be like a river. Our life should be rich in its gentleness, its patience, its charity, its longsuffering, its forgiveness, its serving. We want love that does not count its forgivings—seven times, but forgives seventy times seven times. We want a love that is kind, not merely to those who show kindness, but also to those who are unkind. We want a love that loves on when

grieved and hurt; that does good in return for evil and hatred; that teaches us to pray for those who despitefully use us. We want a love that is unaffected by men's cruel treatment; that pours out its gentleness and goodness upon evil and good; that, in the enduring of personal injury, is like the lake which, when ploughed by the cleaving keel, instantly heals its own hurt and is calm and smooth again. We want a love that abounds in service, forgetting itself, giving, sacrificing unto the uttermost, to bless others. We want a love which beareth all things and never faileth. We may never say, even after the highest achievements of loving, "I have now reached my ideal of unselfishness, of patience, of gentleness, of serving. I have now done my share for other people. I will take no more burdens on me. I will wear myself out no more in serving." Our love is to abound yet more and more.

St. Paul prayed that the love of his friends might abound yet more and more in knowledge. Love without knowledge is mere emotion, which soon dies out. We must know God to love him truly. The reason so many do not love God is because they do not know him. This suggests the importance of a continual growth in knowledge of God. How can we

get this knowledge? How do we get to know a human friend better? Is it not by meeting him often; by talking with him to learn his thoughts and feelings; by watching his acts to learn the mode of his life; by observing his disposition and bearing to discover his spirit? How else can we get to know God better? If we never meet with him, if we never talk with him, if we never study his word, if we never observe his ways, how can we ever know him? The Bible reveals God. It unfolds his character and tells us what are his thoughts toward us, what is his will for us. Study the Book if you would know God.

Jesus was called the Word. A word reveals thought. A thought lies in the depths of your soul and no one can read it. Then you speak, and the thought is made known. In the depths of God's being lay the mystery of his love, grace and truth. Men could not know it. No one by searching could find out God. Then Jesus came, the Word, revealing the thoughts that were in the mind of the Father. God laid bare his heart in Christ. Know Jesus and you will know God. Then, knowing God better, your love for him will abound more and more.

We stand on the mere edge of a great ocean of knowledge, as we seek to learn of God. We

can get, at the best, only little fragments of knowledge of him. Spain used to stamp on her coins the two pillars of Hercules, the two great promontories of rock at Gibraltar, casting over the figures a scroll bearing the words, *Ne plus ultra*—"No more beyond." She fancied that there were no lands beyond those rocks. But one day a bold spirit sailed far away beyond these pillars of Hercules and discovered a new world. Then Spain wisely changed her coins, striking off the word *Ne*, leaving *Plus ultra*—"More beyond." Some of us may have been fancying that we know all of God there is to be known in this world. But out beyond our little *Ne plus ultra* there lies a vast continent of knowledge of him. We may study theology, the science of God, for ages, and still we shall only begin to know him.

Then the more we know of God and love him, the more shall we love our fellow-men. For true human love is only the lesson of God's love learned. We only try to think over God's love thoughts. Jesus commands us to love each other as he loves us. It is only as we learn how Christ loves us that we know how to love one another. All our lessons in loving we must get from him. We must know Christ's patience before we can be patient, Christ's gentleness

before we can be gentle, Christ's way of forgiving before we can truly forgive.

There is a medieval legend of a priest who knocked one day at a peasant's door and found his king seated at meat at the peasant's table. He was greatly surprised, and expressed fear as to the effect of such condescension. "But," answered the king, "do we not meet as brothers —this peasant and I—about the table of a common Lord, yonder where you minister? And if I own that brotherhood so freely there, should I not sometimes own it elsewhere?" The king's answer contained love's lesson for us. We are all one in Christ—rich and poor, great and small, refined and unrefined, and we should be one in life and spirit everywhere.

Another of St. Paul's prayers is that his friends may approve the things that are excellent. We must be always making selections in this world. We cannot take up everything that lies in our path, and we ought to choose the best things. Even among right things there is room for choice, for some right things are better than others. There are a great many good people, however, who choose habitually not the best things, but second-rate things. They labor for the bread that perisheth, when they might labor for the meat that endureth unto

everlasting life. Even in their prayers they ask for temporal blessings, when they might ask for spiritual gifts and treasures. They are like the man with the muck-rake, who drags his implement among the weeds and worthless rubbish, while over his head are crowns that he might take into his hands. They are moved in their choices by lower instead of higher considerations. They sell heavenly birthrights for mere messes of pottage. They toil for this world's things when they might have been laying up treasures in heaven.

We have only one life to live; we ought therefore to do the best possible with it. We pass through this world only once; we ought to gather up and take with us the things that will truly enrich us—things we can keep forever. "Only the eternal is important," is the inscription engraved over the doorway of the Cathedral of Milan. It is not worth our while to toil and moil and strive and struggle to do things that will leave no results when life is done, while there are things we can do which are not in vain.

What then are the things that are excellent? All Christian kindness is excellent. It leaves results in this world, in other lives—results which will outlast time. The words which

you speak in love and truth into other hearts, will never perish. The poet found his song, long, long after it had been sung, from beginning to end, in the heart of his friend. So will it be with every word spoken and every song sung for Christ; some day we shall find them all in some heart. Christian service is among the excellent things which we should choose. Idleness is cursed. It produces death in the idler. Work blesses the world and blesses him who works.

Noble character is excellent. Some one says, "The only thing that walks back from the tomb with the mourners, and refuses to be buried, is character." This is true. What a man is survives him. It never can be buried. It stays about his home when his footsteps are heard there no more. It lives in the community where he was known. And this same thing—character—a man carries with him into the other life. Hence we should take care to build into our character only beautiful things, things that will be admitted into the heavenly kingdom. St. Paul teaches this when he says: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report—

think on these things"—and "these things do." It is worth while to gather into our character these beautiful things, these eternal things, for we can keep them forever.

Another excellent thing is true friendship. We must choose the best. There are friendships that only hurt the life, that poison the fountain of being, that mar the beauty of the soul. We can find no perfect friends; all have their faults—ways that will annoy and vex us, peculiarities that will fret us. Still there are friends who, with all their imperfections, are heaven's holy gifts to us. To have a friend who is true, worthy, noble, pure, is a blessed privilege. Friendship brings benedictions into our life. It makes us stronger, for it shares life's loads with us. It is an inspiration to us. It writes its lines of beauty on our soul. The things that are true, which holy friendship brings into our life, we shall have always. Even death cannot rob us of them.

These are suggestions of the "things that are excellent," which a Christian should choose to live for. Thousands of lives are wasted because they are spent in striving after things that are not worth while. We are immortal beings, and it is folly for us to live for this life only and neglect the things that are eternal.

"To hug the wealth ye cannot use
And lack the riches all may gain:
O blind, and wanting wit to choose,
Who house the chaff and burn the grain!
And still doth life with starry towers
Lure to the bright, divine ascent.
Be yours the things ye would; be ours
The things that are more excellent.

The grace of friendship—mind and heart
Linked with their fellow heart and mind;
The gains of science, gifts of art,
The sense of oneness with our kind;
The thirst to know and understand—
A large and liberal discontent;
There are the goods in life's rich hand,
The things that are more excellent."

Another of St. Paul's prayers for his friends is that they may be sincere and void of offence. Sincere means without wax. In Rome's palmy days, many people lived in fine marble palaces. Sometimes a dishonest workman, when there was a piece chipped off a stone, would fill in the chink with a kind of cement, called wax, an imitation of marble. For a time, the deception would not be discovered, but after a while the wax would be discolored, and thus the fraud, the untruth, would be exposed. It became necessary, therefore, to put in contracts with builders a clause, providing that the work should

be *sine cera*—without wax. This is the story of our word sincere. It means that the life described is true through and through, without deception, without fraud, or any mere seeming. Its professions are real. It makes no pretensions, but is simply itself.

We should mark well this feature of life for which St. Paul prays. Insincerity in any form mars the beauty of a character. What a farce people play who pose before the world for what they are not! We all remember how, in what scathing words, Jesus denounced hypocrisy. This was the only sin of which he did not speak with pity and compassion. There may be hypocrisy in other things besides religion. One may be a hypocrite in dress, in mode of living, in professions of friendship, in business, in work. There is a great deal that flashes for diamond that is not diamond. There is much show of wealth that is only poverty in purple robes. There is plenty of marble in appearance that is only wax. St. Paul's prayer is that his friends may be sincere in all things. It is a good prayer for all of us to make for ourselves.

We should be true through and through. We should live so that we shall never be afraid of exposure. What a farce it is to live falsely, insincerely before the world, a mere empty

life of outside seeming, while the divine eye is looking down into the heart and seeing the poor miserable reality!

St. Paul prays also that his friends may be without offence. We use the word offend of hurt feeling. We offend a man when we make him angry. The Bible takes small note of mere hurt feelings, but it regards as of infinite importance a hurt done to a life. We offend another in the Bible sense when, by our example, our influence, our words, any act of ours, we cause him to stumble or fall. Paul's prayer is that his friends should never do anything that would cause others to stumble. It is very important that we learn to live so that we shall never harm other souls. Jesus spoke very earnestly of the sin of causing a little one to stumble. It is a grievous thing to sin; it is a yet more grievous thing to be the cause of another's sinning. We must guard our habits, lest we set the feet of others in paths which will lead them to ruin. We must watch our words, lest in unguarded moments we say that which will poison another's mind. We must look to our example, lest its influence become the bane and curse of an innocent life. We should be without offence in all our life.

Another of St. Paul's prayers for his friends

was that they should be filled with the fruits of righteousness. It is good to be without offence, —that is, not to do any harm in the world. Yet that is not the best thing. Some people are so afraid of doing harm that they never do any good. But that is not the kind of goodness the Bible urges us to have. We are to be active, always abounding in the work of the Lord. We are to bring forth fruit, much fruit, and so be Christ's disciples. We are to be filled with the fruits of righteousness. This suggests a life that is holy, bearing the fruits of the Spirit,— love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faith. It means also a life full of good works. We must be useful people, helpful people. The world is a great sea, in whose dark waters souls are perishing, and we must be fishers of men. All about us are human need and sorrow, and we must be comforters and helpers. We must be Christ to the world, ever carrying in us the healing of Christ.

It is on its branches that the vine bears its fruits, and we are the branches. Christ must live in this world in us and through us. The fruits with which we would feed the world's hunger must grow in our lives. "Give ye them to eat," is Christ's answer when we tell him of the people all about us who are perishing.

It is fruits of righteousness with which we are to be filled. The revival that the world waits for to-day in the church is a revival of righteousness. "You are not as good as your Book," said a Brahmin to the missionaries in India. "If you were as good as your Book, India would soon be Christ's." If all Christians were as good as their Book, this whole world would be Christ's in a little while. We must keep the commandments. We must be holy. We must live righteously and godly in this present evil world. We must bring the kingdom of heaven down to earth in our living.

CHAPTER XII.

Transforming Power of Prayer.

If we with earnest effort could succeed
To make our life one long connected prayer,
As lives of some perhaps have been and are;
If, never leaving thee, we had no need
Our wandering spirits back again to lead
Into thy presence, but continue there,
Like angels standing on the highest stair
Of the sapphire throne—this were to pray, indeed.

But if distractions manifold prevail,
And if in this we must confess we fail,
Grant us to keep at least a prompt desire,
Continual readiness for prayer and praise,
An altar heaped and waiting to take fire
With the least spark, and leap into a blaze.

Trench.

It is a very interesting fact that it was as Jesus was praying that he was transfigured. When he first knelt on the cold mountain, there was no brightness on his face. But, as he continued in prayer, there began to be, at length, a strange glow on his features. Brighter and brighter it grew, until his face shone as the sun. Heaven

came down to earth, and glory crowned the transfiguration mount.

What was true for him in his human life is true also for his people. Prayer transfigures. There may be no such bodily transfiguration as there was in the case of Jesus. Yet we have all seen human faces which had a strange light in them, caused by the peace and joy within. The heart makes the face. The spirit writes the lines of its features on the countenance. An unhappy heart soon makes an unhappy face. Discontent cannot long be hidden ; it soon shows itself on the surface, working up from the soul's depths. Bad temper reveals itself, not only in unseemly outbreaks, but in the whole expression. Lust in the heart before long stains and blotches the features.

On the other hand, good and beautiful things within reveal themselves in the face. We have all seen sick people, who, in sorest pain, yet endured with a patience which made their features glow. We have seen persons enduring sorrow, whose peace seemed to shine through their tears as if a holy lamp were burning within. We have seen old people who had learned life's lessons so well that their faces, though wrinkled with age, appeared transfigured in sweet, quiet beauty.

Then who has not seen faces, even in the coffin, on which in very death there appeared to sit a restful calm, as if the spirit, in departing, had thrown back the reflection of its own blessedness? Some one writes:

How oft we see upon some still, dead face
A strange, new grace:
A beauty that in life we could not trace;

As if, quick pausing in its glad release,
Its spirit touched with peace
The clay o'er which its power now shall cease;

And we who thought to look upon our dead
With shrinking dread,
By that sweet, rapturous calm are comforted.

Even the body is, indeed, ofttimes changed, transfigured, by the grace that dwells within. Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. We are assured, too, that in the resurrection, Christ shall change our mortal bodies into the likeness of his own glorified body. Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory on the transfiguration mount, were saints in their common, every-day heavenly dress.

But whatever we may say about the body, the character of the believer is transfigured. A Christian life is a new incarnation. If Christ dwell in you he will produce in you the same

kind of life which he himself lived when he was on the earth. This change does not come in its completeness instantaneously the moment one believes on Christ. It begins then. But life is large. Life's lessons are many and hard to learn. Paul was an old man when he said, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content." It had taken him many years to learn this lesson of contentment. It takes any of us years to get life's lessons learned. But nothing is clearer than that life's mission here is to be transformed into the likeness of Christ. There is to be a transfiguration of character. Holiness must become the every-day dress of the Christian. We are called to be saints, even in this world.

There is yet another way in which Christian life is transfigured by faith in Christ. The very garments of Jesus were changed, sharing in his transfiguration. This suggests that for the Christian all life's conditions and circumstances —the garments of life—are transfigured.

Take the matter of care. Every life has cares. There are cares in business. There are cares in home-life. There are cares of poverty, but no less has the rich man his cares. Childhood has its anxieties; young faces sometimes appear careworn. No one can escape

care. To many people life is very hard. But Christian faith transfigures care for those who are Christ's and have learned how to live as he teaches us to live. He tells us to be anxious for nothing, because our Father is caring for us. He tells us that life is a school and that all our cares are parts of lessons set for us. That means that every care has hidden in it a secret of blessing—a gift of love our Father has sent to us. Every time you come to a hard point in your life,—an obstacle, a difficulty, a perplexity,—God is giving you a new chance to grow stronger, wiser, or richer-hearted. We try to make life easy for our children, but God is wiser than we are. He wants his children to have struggles, that they may grow brave and noble. Mrs. Sangster writes:

Our way had been to smooth her upward road,
Easing the pressure of each heavy load;
Never to let her white hand know a soil,
Never her back to feel the ache of toil.
Could we have shielded her from every care,
Kept her forever young and blithe and fair,
And from her body warded every pain,
And from her spirit all distress and strain,
This had been joy of joys, our chosen way.
God led her by a different path, each day;
Sorrow and work and anxious care he gave,—
And strife and anguish,—till her soul grew brave.

Thus it is that common care is transfigured by the grace of Christ. It enfolds blessings for us. It carries in its dreary form secrets of good for us. Our drudgeries have benedictions in their wearisome routine; we get many of our best lessons out of them. All we need to learn is how to meet our worries, and they are transfigured for us. The light of Christ shines through them.

St. Paul tells us in a wonderful passage how to get this transformation of care,—to be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer to make our requests, our worries, known to God. Then the peace of God shall guard our hearts and our thoughts. That is transfiguration—God's peace shining through all life's frets. Sleeping on our pillow of stone, with the cold night's chill about us, we have visions of God and glory. Thus care is transfigured by the love of Christ in the heart.

Take sorrow. Every one has sorrow. Being a Christian does not exempt any one from grief. But here, again, faith in Christ brings transfiguration. Not only are we taught to endure patiently and submissively the sorrows that come to us, but we are assured that there is a blessing in them for us, if we accept them with love and trust. One of the deepest truths taught in the

Bible is that earthly sorrow has a mission in the sanctifying of life. One of the most sacred words of all Scripture is that which tells us that Jesus Christ was made perfect through sufferings. This teaches that in the culture of even his sinless character there was something which only suffering could do, which he could get in no other school. His life was not perfect in its development until he had suffered.

We dread pain, and yet the soul that has not experienced pain has not yet touched the deepest and most precious meanings of life. There are things we never can learn, save in the school of pain. There are reaches of life we never can attain, save in the bitterness of sorrow. There are joys we never can have until we come into the dark ways of trial. A French writer says, "Perhaps to suffer is nothing else than to live deeply. Love and sorrow are the two conditions of a profound life." These are true words. Without loving, one can never know anything of life worth knowing; and without suffering, one can never get below the surface in human experience. Not to have sorrow, in some form, is to miss one of life's holiest opportunities. We get our best things out of trial. Those who wear the white robes in heaven are the saints who have come out of great tribulation.

Thus it is that Christian teaching pours the light of Christ upon sorrow. Faith sees sorrow no longer dark and portentous, but struck through with the radiance of heaven, transfigured by the blessedness of Christ.

Duty, also, is transfigured by faith in Christ. Duty is not easy. It covers every moment. Ofttimes it is hard, almost more than we can endure. Men find work oppressive in their places of business and toil. Women bend under their burden of household work, which is never done. Much of all this duty is not only hard, but it is also dreary,—the same things over and over, in endless routine. Ofttimes, too, nothing seems to come out of it at all. It is like dipping up water in a bucket with holes; nothing is gained. The hands are empty at the close, after a whole lifetime of toil. Many people grow discouraged when they think of the hard, grinding routine to which they must put their hands anew every morning. The reward for doing their work well is only more work, and harder.

But here, again, Christian faith transforms all. There is a blessing in duty, no matter how dull and wearisome it is. There is a blessing in the mere doing of it, though nothing seem to come of it. God loves faithfulness, and always re-

wards it. One may work hard for seventy years, and have nothing laid up in banks or in real estate; but if he has wrought truly he has indeed much treasure laid up. Work itself is a blessing, one of the best means of grace. It lays up strength in the body. It trains and develops the powers. It makes a man a man—self-reliant, capable, conscious of power. We talk of the drudgery of our common task-work; it is in this very drudgery that we get our best education. We form good habits, and thus build up life and character.

Then think of a man supporting a home, bringing up a family, providing for his wife and children through all his years, and sending out his sons and daughters to take an honorable place in the world. Suppose that he is as poor at the end of his life as he was at the beginning; if he has done all this, can he say that his commonplace duty all the years has left no blessing? He has not piled money into walls and stocks and goods, but he has built blessing into immortal lives. He has gathered a wealth of noble character into his own soul. He has laid up treasures in heaven by his faithfulness.

These are hints of the way faith in Christ transfigures duty. There is a blessing in every fragment of it when love fills it. An artist's

picture shows a number of angels in a kitchen, doing the work of a weary house-wife. One is putting the kettle on the fire. One is lifting a pail of water. One is getting down the dishes from the cupboard. Another is sweeping the floor. There really is no fiction in this bit of art-work. It is beautiful as angels' work, the household duty of the mothers and daughters in the home. Then we know that there was One, higher than all angels, who actually wrought for years in a peasant carpenter-shop. That is not an artist's fancy,—that is human story. Let not the men who work now in business and at trades, toiling ofttimes even to painful weariness, ever say that work is not holy. All duty is sacred, transfigured, if it be done with love for Christ in the heart.

Thus, turn where we may, we find the bright shining of the glory of the Redeemer in these lives of ours. Our very bodies are made glorious by being the temples of the Holy Spirit. Our characters are renewed and transformed into the beauty of the Lord by the faith that lives within us. Then all life is transfigured,—care, sorrow, duty.

The analogy holds also in the other fact that it is in prayer, communion with God, that this transforming takes place. All true prayer has a

transfiguring influence. It brings us into the immediate presence of God. The holy of holies in the ancient temple, where the Shekinah was, was no holier than where you bow every time you pray. You are looking up into the face of Christ himself. John was not nearer to him, lying upon his breast, than you are in your praying. One cannot thus look up into the face of Christ and not have some measure of transfiguration wrought in him.

Then prayer is the reaching up of the soul toward God. It lifts the life for the time into the highest, holiest frame. A prayerful spirit is full of aspirations for God. Its longings are pressing up Godward. No mood of spiritual life is more blessed than longing. It is God in the soul kindling its desires and yearnings for righteousness and holiness. It is the transfiguring of the spirit which purifies these dull, earthly lives of ours, and changes them, little by little, into the divine image.

All true prayer is characterized by submission to God's will. We come to God's feet full of our own ways and wishes. But it may be that our ways are not God's ways. Perhaps we are willful, insubmissive, rebellious. We desire things that are not best for us, and we are not willing to sink our will in God's. But while

this is our spirit, we cannot even begin to pray. We must be brought to say, "Not my will, but thine be done." Thus praying compels us into surrender and submission. It trains us to leave all our requests at God's feet in confidence. The highest possible Christian consecration is found in the perfect yielding of the human will to the divine. That itself is a transfiguration. Prayer that compels us to submit our way to God's transforms us into God's image.

Then prayer transfigures us, because it brings down divine grace and good into our life. Prayers are answered. The things we pray for we get, if they are things that would truly bless our life. We are weak and pray for strength; we rise from our knees with the power of Christ resting upon us. We pray for holiness, and into our heart comes a new gift of life, and we feel in us impulses toward better things. We are in temptation, with fierce struggles, and calling for help; we receive blessing from the ministry of angels, who are sent to strengthen us. We are in sorrow, and, praying, we get comfort from God. Thus it is that wherever we pray, heaven is open above us, and divine blessings are sent down upon us. The touch of God is upon our soul in some way. Some new brightness begins to shine in our life.

Transforming Power of Prayer

"Lord, what a change within us one short hour
Spent in thy presence will avail to make!
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take!
What parched fields refresh as with a shower!
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;
We rise, and all, the distant and the near,
Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear.
We kneel, how weak! we rise, how full of power!"

Thus prayer transforms our weakness into strength. It changes our defeats into victories. It brings us peace in turmoil. It changes fretting care into quiet trust. It sets rainbows on our storm clouds. It makes our tears of sorrow lenses, through which we see deeper into heaven. It opens the treasures of God's love and enriches us with the best things of grace. Praying, we are transfigured.

CHAPTER XIII.

Serving our Generation.

"My life is not my own, but Christ's, who gave it,
And he bestows it upon all the race;
I lose it for his sake, and thus I save it;
I hold it close, but only to expend it;
Accept it, Lord, for others, through thy grace."

"To have been thought about by God, born in God's thought, and then made by God, is the dearest, grandest, most precious thing in all thinking." It gives dignity and also sacredness to our life to think thus of it. Every true-hearted person, realizing this truth, will seek to work out God's thought in his own character and life. Of course, we cannot do this perfectly, for nothing human is perfect. The artist fails to put all his vision into his picture.

"No great thinker ever lived and taught you
All the wonder that his soul received;
No true painter ever set on canvas
All the glorious vision he conceived.

Serving our Generation

No real poet ever wove in numbers
All his dream; but the diviner part,
Hidden from all the world, spoke to him only,
In the voiceless silence of his heart."

In all our life we do, even at our best, but a little of the beautiful work we intend and plan. We blunder and stumble in our holiest endeavors. Our clumsy hands mar the lovely ideals which our soul visions. We set out in the morning with high resolves, but our evening confessions tell of many a shortcoming. We never live any day as well as we know how to live.

Yet there is a sense in which, without attaining perfection, a human life may fulfill God's plan for it. One of the most interesting illustrations of such a life is David's. The Lord says, "I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, who shall fulfill all my will." Then in another sentence we catch the secret of this life which was so complete. We are told that he "served his own generation by the will of God." It is worth our while to look closely at this inspired description of a life that so pleased God, in order that we may learn how to work out the divine thought for ourselves.

There are several luminous words in the brief sentence which make its meaning very clear. The word served is one of these. David served. This is not a favorite word. We naturally resent the idea of serving. It seems to have an ignoble meaning. But really it is one of the royalest of words. One who has not begun to serve has not begun to live. God never yet made a life for selfishness. Jesus came to show us the perfect divine ideal of human living, and he served unto the very uttermost. "I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister," was his own declaration of his life's central thought and purpose. When they asked him who was greatest in his kingdom, he said, "He that serves." We are to live not to get, but to give; not to be helped, but to help; not to receive, but to bestow. Whittier says:

Love is sweet in any guise;
But its best is sacrifice.

He who, giving, does not crave,
Likest is to him who gave
Life itself the loved to save.

Helen Hunt Jackson puts the same truth in most striking way:

Serving our Generation

When love is strong,
It never tarries to take heed
Or know if its return exceed
Its gifts; in its sweet haste no greed,
No strifes, belong.

It hardly asks
If it be loved at all; to take
So barren seems, when it can make
Such bliss, for the beloved's sake,
Of bitter tasks.

Another phase of the thought lies in the fuller phrase—David served his own generation. This is a large saying. What was David's generation? In general, it was the whole number of the people who lived when he did. Our generation is the entire human family living at the present time on the earth. How can any man serve all his own generation? There are hundreds of millions of people he can never see; how can he do anything for these? One way of serving our own generation is to fill well the little place to which we are assigned in the divine providence. This is the answer to the question for the greater number of us. We can do most to bless the world at large by being a true blessing to the little circle in the midst of which we are placed.

Another way in which we can serve our generation is by giving to it something which will enrich it, which will add to its happiness and good, which will make it better, purer. We have an illustration of this in the story of David's life. He gave much to his generation. He began in a very humble way. He was a shepherd-boy, keeping his father's sheep. No doubt even then he did his lowly work well. Besides, although unconsciously, he was now in training for his larger duties, and he learned aptly. It was not long until his life began to be a blessing.

One day there came a remarkable opportunity for this lad to serve his people and country. A great giant stalked before the lines of the army, challenging the king and his warriors. By single combat the question was to be decided. But there was no one in Saul's army who would accept the challenge and meet the champion. Day after day the mocking scene was repeated. Then David came to the field,—came on a simple errand to his brothers,—and his hand laid the proud giant in the dust. By this victory he served his nation—served his generation.

Then followed a long period of sore trial, when the envy and hatred of Saul made David an exile. He was hunted among the hills by

the king and his men as if he had been a wild beast. His life was continually in peril. He suffered injury and wrong. But even in those days he was serving his own generation. He did this by his noble bearing under wrong and persecution. He never resented the king's anger or the injustice of the treatment he received. He endured it all sweetly. On two occasions, when he had his enemy in his power, he would not harm him, but returned kindness for murderous hate. David served his generation most effectively during those dark years by giving to it such an example of true and beautiful living.

We say that one who paints a fine picture serves his generation. He sets before the eyes of men a fragment of beauty which is a benediction to all who see it, leaving in human hearts a new thought of tenderness, a new vision of noble living, a sentiment which makes lives truer, richer, humaner, diviner. So does every one serve his generation who shows it a fragment of beautiful living—patience under trial, purity and uprightness under temptation, love and meekness under injury and wrong. The blessing of David's behavior while pursued by Saul has stayed all these centuries since in the world, a refining, uplifting, enriching influence.

David also served his generation as king.

Saul had failed. He was not a good king. He was not doing his work well. Then God removed him, and called David to the throne. In many ways David's reign was a blessing. He conquered his people's enemies and took possession of the whole land of promise. His was largely a work of conquest. He desired to build a temple for the Lord, but he was not permitted to do this, for this was not in God's plan for him—this was another man's mission. Yet the temple was in a sense his. The thought of it was his. He purchased the site for it. He gathered vast treasures for its erection. Thus he served his generation by what he did for the honor of God's name.

Any one who sets the name of God in clearer light before men, so that its glory shall shine more widely and its influence touch more hearts and lives, has wrought a service for the race. The whole world was the better for David's reign as king of Israel. The light of his beneficent work reached all lands and shines yet throughout all countries.

David served his generation also through the psalms he wrote. He was the first to give sacred music a place in the worship of God. He organized the great choir which afterwards sang in the temple. Then he wrote the first

hymns which were sung in God's worship. No one can estimate the value to his generation of this one part of David's serving. He who writes a sweet song which lifts men's hearts toward God, which kindles praise and devotion, which inspires joy and hope in sorrow, which gives new impulses to holy living, has done one of the noblest services to his fellow-men which it is permitted to mortal to do on this earth.

But the ministry of David's harp was not for his own generation only; it was for all after generations. David's psalms have been sung now for nearly three thousand years. They have become an important part of the hymnody of the Christian church. Not even the gospels are read more in the devotions of Christian people than some of David's psalms. Who can ever estimate the service to the world of such single psalms as the twenty-third and the fifty-first? How many hearts have been comforted, how many fears quieted, how many trembling feet steadied as they entered the valley of shadows, how many tears of mourners dried, through the reading and singing of the shepherd psalm? How many sinning souls have been led back to God along the paths of penitence by the psalm of repentance?

These are mere suggestions of the way David

served his generation. He did it simply by being faithful in the place of present duty. It was not by any one act alone that he blessed his generation. Of course, there were great single acts whose influence went out widely, but all these acts formed part of the one life. David's shepherd-life seemed lowly and obscure. How was he serving his generation then? He could not have slain Goliath and delivered his country's armies from the terror of the Philistine champion, if, as a shepherd lad, he had not become expert in the use of the sling. Nor could he have written the twenty-third psalm in his old age, breathing into it the precious thoughts which have made it such a blessing to millions, if he had not been a shepherd himself in his boyhood, leading his sheep in the green pastures, beside the still waters, in right paths, through deep, dark valleys. The memories of his youth live in every line of that wonderful psalm of old age. Thus even his childhood had its place in his life of service. Each period fitted him for the next. In all his ways he was faithful. He lived to serve,—to serve God and to serve his generation. In doing so he served all generations after his own, to the end of time. The world is better, sweeter, richer, purer, brighter, to-day, because David lived, served, suffered, reigned and sang.

Serving our Generation

No doubt David's was a rare life. But few other men in the world's history have been of such service to their own and after generations as he was. Even among the great and good the influence of but few reaches beyond their own times, save as all good words and deeds live, being immortal. Besides, only a few men in a generation have power to reach, touch and impress the whole generation. Hence what David did may seem to have no lesson for us. We cannot be kings. We cannot plan temples. We cannot write psalms or hymns which shall live a thousand years. We are little people and can fill only a little place. We cannot serve our generation in the same large way in which David served his. Yet each individual life has its own distinct place in the thought of God, and each may fill out its own pattern.

Even the smallest life lived well blesses the world. We have only to be true to God and to love, the law of life, and our smallest words and deeds will in some measure at least make the whole race better. Every good word we speak adds something to the sum of goodness in the world. Every good deed we do makes it a little easier for others to do good deeds, and lifts a little higher the standard of living among men. To make one person a little happier each day,

to lighten one burden, to make one heart braver and stronger, to comfort one sorrow, to guide one perplexed soul into peace, to show one bewildered child the right path, to speak the word which helps one tempted person to overcome, to lift one fainting robin back unto his nest again —one such service is enough to redeem a life from uselessness and to make it a blessing to a whole generation.

Many people are oppressed and disheartened by the seeming smallness and insignificance of their life. "I can be of no use in this great world," they say. "I am only one leaf in the forest, one flower in all the gardens and fields." Very dispiriting is the effect of this feeling of littleness in this great, multitudinous life. But we live as individuals. God knows and calls us by name. Each life is a distinct individuality. We know not what is small or what is large. Each smallest deed of ours starts influences which never shall cease to be felt in the universe. Poets tell us how the pebble dropped in the sea starts wavelets which break on all earth's shores, and how the word spoken into the air sets in motion reverberations which go round and round the sphere. We know at least that no smallest act or word of love ever can be lost.

Much of life is only fragments—unfinished

things, broken sentences, interrupted efforts, pictures left uncompleted, sculptures only half hewn, letters only partly written, songs only begun and choked in tears. But not one of these fragments is lost, if it has love's blessed life in it.

"A broken song—it had dropped apart
Just as it left the singer's heart,
And was never whispered upon the air,
Only breathed into the vague 'Somewhere.'

A broken prayer—only half said
By a tired child at his trundle-bed;
While asking Jesus his soul to keep,
With parted lips he fell asleep.

A broken life—hardly half told
When it dropped the burden it could not hold.
Of these lives and songs and prayers, half done,
God gathers the fragments every one."

God gathers the fragments; they are not lost. Then they stay in other lives, making the world better, sweeter, richer. Shall we call this a small thing? Even the lowliest life may thus serve its generation and all after generations. You may start something beautiful to-day which shall bless the world to its remotest ages.

There is yet another word in this epitaph of

David which is needed to complete our lesson. "David . . . served his own generation by the will of God." That is, the will of God was the guide of his life. God had a plan for his life. We are not haphazard things in this world; we are thoughts of God. The practical question is, "How can we find and fulfill God's plan for our life?" We know it is possible to miss it altogether. King Saul missed God's plan for his life. He might have served his generation so as to bless it and bless all the world, leaving a name of honor and an influence for good for all after ages. Judas missed God's plan for his life. He might have been an apostle of Christ's grace, his name like fragrance; but instead, his picture is turned to the wall and a hideous shame gathers about his name. Thousands more have missed finding and fulfilling God's thought for their life. Thousands are doing the same every day.

How do they miss it? By not accepting God's will for them. Saul began almost at once to take his own way instead of God's. He obeyed only in part, or he did not obey at all. Judas resisted the teachings of the Master. He let the world into his heart. He gave way to the devil. He missed glory and got shame and everlasting contempt. The lesson is very sol-

emn. We can fail of beauty and good for our life and miss the radiant loveliness God has planned for us. We surely will fail and miss all if we refuse to fashion our life according to the will of God.

On the other hand, we may find God's plan for our life. David found it and fulfilled it. Thousands more have found it. The highest of all examples was Jesus Christ. He lived out perfectly the divine purpose. In all cases, the will of God has been the one law of life. At every step we find Jesus referring to his Father's will. Then at last he could say, "Father, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." If we do God's will, day by day, we shall serve our own generation and fill out the pattern of life sketched for us by the great Master of all lives.

Then the end will be blessed. "David, after he had served his own generation, fell on sleep." That was well. His work was done. Rest is sweet when tasks are finished. He fell on sleep, but his life goes on yet. God owned it and enshrined it. The songs he sang we are singing to-day.

Victor Hugo, in his old age, said: "The nearer I approach the end, the plainer I hear around me the immortal symphonies of the world

which invites me. When I go down to the grave, I can say, like so many others, 'I have finished my day's work;' but I cannot say 'I have finished my life!' My day's work will begin again next morning. My tomb is not a blind alley; it is a thoroughfare; it closes with the twilight to open with the dawn."

CHAPTER XIV.

The Ministry of Suffering.

"Look thou beyond the evening star," she said,
"Beyond the changing splendors of the day;
Accept the pain, the weariness, the dread,—
Accept and bid me stay!"

And now I look beyond the evening star,
Beyond the changing splendors of the day,
Knowing the pain he sends more precious far,
More beautiful than they.

Celia Thaxter.

One of the most remarkable visions of the Apocalypse shows us a throng arrayed in white robes—heaven's most honored ones. When the question is asked, "Who are these, and whence came they?" the answer is, "These are they which came out of great tribulation." That is, the glorified ones of heaven have been the suffering ones of earth. Suffering is a cloud whose earth-side is very black, unrelieved oft-times by a single gleam of brightness. But here we get a glimpse of the heaven-side of the same cloud. Those who have been in sore

tribulation in this world appear in brightest glory in heaven. The sufferings through which they have passed have not destroyed them, have not marred nor defaced the beauty of their lives. Indeed, they are seen here away beyond the experiences of pain and trial, shining in robes of victory and blessedness. And this high honor is the result of the suffering of their earthly life.

Some people regard suffering as punishment for sin, and when it comes to them they ask what they have done to merit such severe treatment. Others interpret it as showing unkindness in God, and ask why, if God is their Father and loves them, he can send such trials upon them.

But the Scriptures, while they do not solve all the mystery of suffering, show us that it is no accident in God's world, but is one of God's messengers, which, if received in humility and faith, will always leave a blessing. Our Lord once bade his disciples consider the lilies how they grew. Where do the lilies get their beauty? Down in the darkness of the soil the roots lie, hidden, despised, amid clods; but there they prepare the loveliness and the sweetness which make the lilies so admired as they press up into the air. Is it not so with the fairest

things of life, with the sweetest things of experience? Are not many of them born down in the darkness of sorrow, suffering or pain? Many a life which we admire, whose gentleness, purity and sweetness are benedictions to the world, got these lovely things in a sick-room or in experiences of suffering.

This is the great truth that lies in this Apocalyptic picture. The happy saints, with their white robes and their palms, had come out of great tribulation; and the tribulation had helped to give them their radiant garments and their glad joy. We may say, then, that the design of God, in all the afflictions which come upon his people, is to make them better, to promote their purification of character, to prepare them for the inheritance of the saints in light.

The word tribulation is suggestive. It comes from a word which means a flail. The thresher uses the flail to beat and bruise the wheat sheaves, that he may separate the golden grain from the chaff and straw. Tribulation is God's threshing—not to destroy us, but to get what is good, heavenly and spiritual in us separated from what is wrong, earthly and fleshly. Nothing less than blows of pain will do this. The evil clings so to the good, the golden wheat of goodness in us is so wrapt up in the strong chaff of the old

life, that only the heavy flail of suffering can produce the separation.

Not all sufferings hang crape on doors. The family circle may not be broken by bereavement, and yet there may be tribulation crashing deep into the heart. There are people who wear no garb or sign of mourning who yet are really mourners. There are those who carry pain at their hearts continually, in the brightest sunshine, when they seem gayest and happiest, because of things in those nearest and dearest to them, which weigh upon them like a cruel cross. Then, not all the sufferings that visit the soul come from without; indeed, the worst grief is that which the evil of our own hearts has caused. To a tender spirit nothing gives so much pain as its own sins and failures. We grieve when we have to lay a friend away in the grave; but we ought to grieve far more when some sin has defiled our conscience and hung a new veil between our soul and God. In the earnest Christian life, there are no tears so bitter as those that are shed in the soul's agonies, as it strives after holiness.

There is no truth taught more clearly than that perfection of character can be reached only through suffering. We can never get away from our old self, and grow up into purity, strength

and nobleness, without pain. The fires of passion and iniquity which are in our old nature cannot be burnt out without agony. Holiness cannot be reached without cost. Those who would gain the lofty heights must climb the cold, rough steeps that lead to them. It is God's design in all the pain he sends us to make us better. His fires mean purification. His prunings mean more fruitfulness. In whatever form the suffering comes—as bereavement, as sin or shame in a friend, or as penitence and contrition over one's own faults—the purpose of pain is merciful. God is saving us in all our life in this world; and suffering is one of the chief agents he employs. The redeemed in heaven have come out of great tribulation. But for the tribulation they would never have worn the white robes nor borne the palms.

Jesus gave us as one of his beatitudes, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." It is worth while to notice where this beatitude stands. "Blessed are the poor in spirit." "Blessed are the meek." "Blessed are the peacemakers." "Blessed are the merciful." "Blessed are the pure in heart." Then, in the heart of this cluster, "Blessed are they that mourn." We do not question the blessedness of humility, of meekness, of the peacemaking spirit, of purity

of heart, of mercifulness; and mourning is set by the Master in the same cluster. Heaven's radiant light shines about Christian sorrow, just as about purity of heart, mercifulness, or spiritual hunger. Yet the blessing lies, not in the sorrow, but in the comfort. "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." God's comfort is such a rich blessing, that it is worth while to have sorrow that we may have the comfort. This picture in the Apocalypse, from the heavenly side, helps us to understand our Lord's beatitude. Those who have mourned on earth will wear the whitest robes in the glory of heaven.

St. Paul, too, speaks of the blessed ministry of suffering. "We glory in tribulations, also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope." That is, tribulation works out in us qualities of Christian character which cannot be developed in human gladness. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the doctrine of suffering is put in this way: "All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous, but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness." Pain is God's pruning-knife; it cuts deeply, ofttimes, and seems to destroy; but

the result is greater fruitfulness. Suffering is God's furnace fire. Its hot flames burn as if to work utter destruction; but afterwards the gold that before was dim and impure shines in dazzling brightness.

"God never would send you the darkness
If he felt you could bear the light;
But you would not cling to his guiding hand
If the way were always bright;
And you would not care to walk by faith
Could you always walk by sight.

So he sends you the blinding darkness,
And the furnace of seven-fold heat.
'Tis the only way—believe me—
To keep you close to his feet—
For 'tis always so easy to wander
When our lives are glad and sweet."

We have all known Christian sufferers who have grown into rare, sweet beauty as they have suffered. They have lost their earthliness and have learned heavenliness. Pride has given way to humility. Impatience has become sweet patience. The harsh music has grown soft and gentle. The rough marble has taken the shape of graceful beauty. It is true, as a rule, that the noblest, richest, purest, most beautiful lives in this world have been lives of suffering. There are elements of loveliness in the depths of every

life which only the fires of pain can bring out. The photographer carries his picture into a darkened room to develop it. God often takes his children into the chamber of pain and draws the curtains, while he there brings out the features of his own image which before had been only dim and shadowy outlines.

But our lesson is not yet complete. Not all afflictions make people better. Not all who suffer are made thereby more meet for heaven. Tribulation does not always work patience. Chastening does not always, even afterward, yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness. We have all seen people suffering who only became more impatient, irritable, ill-tempered, selfish and cold, as they suffered. Many a life loses all the beauty it ever had in the furnace of affliction. There are dangerous shoals skirting the deeps of affliction, and many frail barques are wrecked in the darkness. In no experience of life have most persons more need of wise friendship and firm, loving guidance than in their times of trouble.

It is not said in the Revelation that tribulation itself made the robes of the saints white. Tribulation is the instrument, the hand that washes; but it is the blood of the Redeemer that makes the garments shine so radiantly.

That is, those who suffered were united to Christ as branches in a vine, and in all their sufferings were nourished by his life.

We should learn well how to meet and endure trial so as to get from it the ministry of good and of blessing which God means it to work in us. We must make sure for one thing that we are truly in Christ. Two trees stood side by side, one early spring. Both of them were bare. The sun poured down his warm beams upon them both, and the clouds emptied their rain upon them. Soon one of them was covered with bursting buds and then with rich foliage; but the other was still bare as ever. One of the trees had life and the other had no life. Where there was life the sun and the rain called out rich beauty; where there was no life the effect of the sun and rain was to make the tree even more dreary and desolate than before. Where there is spiritual life in a soul, afflictions call it out until it glows in every feature. Where there is no Christ in the heart, afflictions only make the life wither.

Then to get the intended benefit of the ministry of pain, we must receive it as God's messenger. Once in the days of old, three strangers came to a good man's tent as wayfaring men. He courteously opened his doors to them and

hospitably entertained them. It turned out that two of the men were angels and the third was the Lord himself. They brought their entertainer messages from God, and then departed, leaving benedictions in his home. We imagine that all angels wear radiant dress and come with smiling face and gentle voice. Thus artists paint them. But truly they come ofttimes in very sombre garb. One writes:

> All God's angels come to us disguised,—
> Sorrow and sickness, poverty and death,
> One after other lift their frowning masks,
> And we behold the seraph's face beneath,
> All radiant with glory and the calm
> Of having looked upon the face of God.

We should receive sorrow always reverently, with welcome, as God's messenger. We should accept its message, even in our pain, as a word from God himself. No messenger of pain ever comes without a blessing in its hot hand for us. If we welcome it as coming in the name of the Lord, it will leave benedictions. Mrs. Gilchrist says of Mary Lamb, "She had a life-long sorrow, and learned to find its companionship not bitter." It is possible so to acquiesce in God's will when it brings pain or grief, that all our life shall be enriched and blessed through the suffering.

The Ministry of Suffering

To get the benefit of the ministry of suffering we must seek true comfort. Most people have very imperfect ideas regarding this matter of comfort. They suppose that if they can cease to weep and resume again their old familiar course of life, they are comforted. They think only of getting through the trial, and not of getting anything of good or blessing out of it. But the real problem in enduring pain is not to bear it bravely, without wincing; to pass through it patiently and even rejoicingly; but to get from it new strength for life, new purity of soul, new revealings of God's face, more of the love of Christ in our heart, and fresh grace for obedience and duty. We ought to get something good out of every experience of pain, some new victory over sin, some fresh impulse for service.

When we have passed through a season of suffering and stand beyond it, there ought to be a new light in our eye, a new glow in our face, a new gentleness in our touch, a new sweetness in our voice, a new hope in our heart, and a new consecration in our life. We ought not to stay in the shadows of sorrow, but should come again to the place of service and duty. We ought not to permit our tears to flow too long, but should turn our grief quickly into new

channels of loving devotion and active usefulness. When we come again, after our time of sorrow or pain, our face should shine as did the face of Moses when he came down from the mount. The comfort that God gives puts deep new joy into the heart and anoints the mourner with a new baptism of love and power. We must be sure to get true comfort when we are in tribulation, for then our tribulation will help to fit us for the glory of heaven.

In the vision of the Apocalypse we see earth's mourners beyond all their tribulation. Suffering is not to last always. If we are Christ's disciples we are going through it—we must go through it to reach heaven. Glory lies beyond the veil of sorrow, and we must go through the dark stream to reach it. But it is only a narrow stream, and soon we shall have crossed it and shall be beyond it forever. In the wonderful shepherd psalm we read of passing through the valley of shadows. The shepherd leads his flock through the gloomy vale to reach pasture and shelter on the other side. Beyond our sorrows we shall find blessedness. The pain of earth will be forgotten in the joy of heaven, and the joy of heaven will be richer and sweeter because of earth's pain.

CHAPTER XV.

Refuge from Strife of Tongues.

"For when the love we held too light
Was gone away from our speech and sight,
No bitter tears,
No passionate words of fond regret,
No yearning of grief could pay the debt
Of thankless years.

Oh, now, while this kind love lingers near,
Grudge not the tender words of cheer,
Leave none unsaid;
For a heart can have no sadder fate
Than some day to wake—too late—
And find love dead!"

There is a great deal of power for evil in human speech. Few people altogether escape the hurt of tongues. No name is pure enough to be forever safe against vile insinuations, cruel aspersions. Even Jesus, whose life was holy, harmless, separate from sinners, did not escape the slanderer's tongue. It is strange how much unloving speech there is in this world. On the smallest provocation men become angry, and speak violent words. Even those who profess

to be Christ's too often lose control of their speech and say words which cut like swords. There are homes in which the principal talk is wrangling—the strife of tongues. There are children with tender souls, who grow up in the midst of worldly contentions, scarcely ever hearing a gentle or loving word.

Then there is a strife of tongues around us, even when the words are not spoken against us. Think of all the speech one must hear as the days go by, speech that is not loving, helpful, encouraging, comforting. The gift of speech is one of the noblest that God has given to man. It was meant to be loving, true, wise, enriching, and full of blessing. God gave us our tongues that with them we might speak to him in prayer, praise and worship, and speak to our fellow-men in gladness, in love, in hope, in all helpful words.

Our Lord has told us that for every idle word that men speak they must give account. For every idle word! Notice that it is not for every sinful word, every bitter word, every false word, every impure word kindling unholy suggestions which may burst into flame and leave the whole life blackened. Of course, for such words, words that lead to sin, we must give account. But Jesus said that we must give

account for every idle word we speak. Think of the idle words to which we have to listen! What is the larger part of the conversation that goes on in parlors, in clubs, during walks and rides? Is it wise, good, wholesome, useful talk? Does it instruct, interest, inspire, stimulate? People chatter on forever and say not one word worth remembering. Yet we cannot get away from this strife of tongues.

It is full of misrepresentations, too, reflections on the absent, innuendoes, suspicions, criticisms, censures. It is strange how much of the talk we hear is about the absent, and with what ruthless unconcern people say evil things of those who are not present to hear. Characters are discussed and dissected as if they were nothing more than bits of clay. Names are taken up and gossiping tongues whisper their hints of scandal even of those whom an hour before they were praising obsequiously. Reputations are blighted. It is the rarest thing that a full, hearty, honest word is spoken of any absent one. Evermore this sad chatter about people goes on in society. We cannot but hear it, for we are not deaf; but if we are honorable, charitable and true-hearted, these words hurt us. We need a refuge from them.

"The strife of tongues!" How truly these

words picture the life which is about every one of us! And men and women with sensitive spirits grow weary of it, and long to flee away to some quiet retreat, where they shall no longer be hurt by the unending strife. So much inharmonious talk harms us. We grow tired of hearing criticism and fault-finding. It worries and frets us to be nagged at continually. It pains us to know that those we have trusted as friends should have spoken of us with such careless tongue. It grieves us to learn that we have been misjudged, our motives misconstrued, our actions misunderstood, our own words perverted and their meaning misrepresented. We get weary of all this, and sometimes wish we had wings like a dove, that we might fly away and be at rest.

The same psalm that gives us the picture of the strife of tongues also unveils the refuge we want from all this confusion of words.

> "In the covert of thy presence shalt thou
> hide them from the plottings of man;
> Thou shalt keep them secretly in a
> pavilion from the strife of tongues."

God has provided a refuge into which we may flee, where we shall not be hurt by the strife of tongues. What is the refuge?

It is not by falling in ourselves with this

stream of talk that we escape its hurt. That is our danger. When we are with those who have only idle words, empty chit-chat, on their tongues, it is easy for us to join them in the frivolous speech. When we hear others gossiping about their neighbors, telling bits of news, repeating derogatory stories, hinting suspicious things, we find it quite natural to enjoy it all and then to add our portion to the common stock. When we are among those who are saying unkindly things of another, casting arrows of censure, sneer or sarcasm at the good name of an absent person, making his faults a subject of conversation, holding a sort of clinic over his character, and dissecting it for their own wicked delight, how easily we slip into the same groove of talk, unless we are most watchful.

Who has never caught himself laughing at the things people were saying about some dear friend of his, and even adding little bits which his own confidential relation of friendship had permitted him to learn about his friend? Or when we find ourselves among those who are wrangling over questions, or quarreling about creeds or politics, or something else, it is not hard for us to take sides and wrangle as vigorously as the others. In a home where strife is

going on we are always in danger of entering into and adding to the bitterness by our own excited and exciting words.

This is not the refuge from the strife of tongues which God provides. It may be the easiest thing just to drop into the stream and drift with it, but we are only hurt if we do this thinking to save ourselves from the evil of other men's sins. We are deserting our colors and going over to the enemy. We may not surrender to the strife of tongues to get clear of the pain the strife causes. We must be witnesses for Christ. If others all about us sin with their tongues, we must be sure that we honor our Master either in speech or by our silence.

Nor may we seek a refuge from the strife of tongues by stoical indifference. If the talk we hear concerns ourselves and is condemnatory, we would do well first to ask whether it be true, whether the things said of us may not have at least some shadow of truth in them. It is well for many of us that we must live in an atmosphere of criticism. If others always spoke well of us, invariably commending us, it would make us proud and self-conceited. It is well for us that there always are those about us who are ready to see our faults and are not afraid to expose them.

Refuge from Strife of Tongues

Francis Quarles said: "If any speak ill of thee, flee home to thine own conscience and examine thy heart. If thou be guilty, it is a just correction; if not guilty, it is a fair instruction. Make use of both. So shalt thou distill honey out of gall, and out of an open enemy create a secret friend."

Nor is the divine refuge from the strife of tongues found in flight. It may be the easiest thing to take the wings of a dove and fly away. Men have run to the covert of the rocks and the caverns, to the convent or the monastery, to the hermit's cell, to escape this unhallowed strife. But that is not the way God wants us to do. He needs us in the heart of society, for he desires us to witness for him. We are to let our light shine upon the world's darkness to dispel it. We are to live among those who are not good, to show them a pattern of true and beautiful living. You find yourself, for example, in an uncongenial home. The spirit of love has not been cultivated and there is a strife of tongues even in that sacred sanctuary. The uncongenial life is hurting you. You feel like fleeing from it. But probably it is your duty to stay there. You must therefore find your refuge in the midst of the very uncongenialities which make the home so hard a place for you to live.

The same is true of most of our environments. We cannot flee out of them. Our duty requires us to stay where we are. God needs us where he has placed us. Flight from the environment would be flight from duty; we should thus prove disloyal to our Master, and fail in our search for shelter.

But there is a refuge which we can find in the very midst of the strife of tongues. They tell us that when the terrible cyclone sweeps over a country, there is a spot at its centre, which is so quiet and still that a leaf is scarcely stirred, where a baby might sleep undisturbed. So at the centre of the sorest strife we may find a pavilion, where no hurt can come to us.

How can we find it? First by having the peace of God in our own heart. If we are in right relations with God, his bosom is our refuge. In the time of strife we can always turn to him, and in his presence, in his love, our heart can be at rest. Then we must keep our heart ever warm and loving toward those who make the uncongenial environment. Nothing they do must disturb our love for them. If we live thus, we shall have a pavilion in which God will ever hide us from the strife of tongues. The strife will cause pain, but it will not mar the sweetness of our spirit.

Refuge from Strife of Tongues

There are plants and flowers which grow in the early spring under the snow-drifts and are not hurt by the cold. So will the graces of the heart be kept tender, beautiful and sweet amid the harshest uncongenialities, even beneath unkindnesses and cruelties, if we have this refuge of God's love into which to flee.

One secret of security from the hurt of tongues is the keeping of love in the heart. Slanders or bitter words of any kind can harm us only when we yield to the feeling of resentment and anger. So long as we continue loving through all the strife, we are hidden away in a safe refuge. It is impatience that opens the door of the refuge and lets harm in. The sin is not in being tempted, but in yielding to the temptation. Our Lord taught us to pray for those who despitefully use us and persecute us. While we pray for them, their cruel words have no power to hurt us.

We have in Jesus Christ the highest example of the truth of this lesson. Never about any other life did the strife of words rage as it raged about him. Men's cruelty knew no limit. Poisoned tongues emptied their most envenomed bitterness about him. They uttered the vilest charges against him. They made the worst accusations against his character. They pursued

him with the keenest malice. Falsehood did its worst in defaming him. But none of these things hurt him. He kept his sweetness of spirit, his serenity of soul, through all the strife of words. If we look at his refuge, we find that, first, he kept love in his heart through all the strife. He never grew impatient. No bitterness ever entered his soul, no anger, no feeling of resentment. He never once returned hate for hate, but only and always love for hate. While the men were driving the nails in his hands and feet he was praying for them. "Father, forgive them." His love never ebbed for a moment.

We can stay in God's pavilion and be safe from the hurt of the strife of tongues only when we keep ourselves in the love of God. If we grow angry and speak unadvisedly, or let our heart grow bitter and our lips utter words of unkindness or resentment, we have sinned. The strife has hurt us. We must love on and pray on and seek the good of those who are treating us so bitterly.

The language of the psalm is very beautiful. "Thou shalt hide them"—thy children, thy believing ones,—"in the secret of thy presence, from the pride of man. Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues."

That is, when the world wrongs us, or assails us with its darts of evil, God hides us in the secret of his own presence. When a child comes in from the street, alarmed, trembling, from the midst of evil that has threatened it, the mother draws it close to her own side, into the secret of her own presence, and holds it there until fear is quieted and all danger is passed. That is the way Christ does when his little ones are trembling and afraid in the midst of the strife of tongues. A New Testament word says, "Your life is hid with Christ in God." What need we care for the world's worst of rage, falsehood, calumny and unkindness, when we are thus hidden in God! Men cannot hurt the stars by flinging stones at them; the stars are hidden in God's heavenly refuge. No strife of tongues can hurt us, if we are in God's pavilion of love.

We cannot get away from the assailing of men's tongues. We must hear much speech that hurts or wounds and much that wearies and saddens us. But we can be so hidden in Christ, so wrapped in the folds of his garments, so held in his heart of hearts, that the strife shall not touch us. He will hide us in the secret of his presence from the pride of man. He will keep us secretly in a pavilion, from the strife of

tongues. There is ever need for fresh lessons on the duty of loving speech. We should do our part to quell the strife of tongues in this world. This we can do in some measure at least by guarding our own lips that they never add to the volume of this unseemly strife. We can fulfill our duty yet more adequately if we continually put into the stream of speech sweet words, wholesome words, words that will prove healing, inspiring, strengthening, encouraging. We never know the power of such words for good. They give happiness and cheer and make people better.

There is always a mission for good words. Incalculable is their power to bless. Immeasurable, too, is the possibility of helpfulness in these tongues of ours. Bitter will it be if it be found in the end that we have failed to use our speech to bless the world. There is need for hearty words in all human associations. We are afraid to say kind, appreciative things to each other, even to those we love the best. We keep the gentle thoughts sealed up along the years, till our friend is gone. Then by his coffin our lips are unsealed, when true words, warm with love, flow out. But of what use are they then? We might as well keep them sealed up.

Refuge from Strife of Tongues

" Year after year, with a glad content,
In and out of our home he went—
In and out.
Ever for us the skies were clear;
His heart carried the fret and fear,
The care and doubt.

Our hands held with careless hold
All that he won of power and gold,
In toil and pain.
O dear hands that our burdens bore—
Hands that shall toil for us no more—
Never again!

Oh! it was hard to learn our loss,
Bearing daily the heavy cross—
The cross he bore;
To say with an aching heart and head,
' Would to God that our love now dead
Were here once more!' "

CHAPTER XVI.

Faithfulness.

With God there is no great nor small
Save as we yield him part or all.
All that we are his claim demands—
Spirit and brain and heart and hands;
Then, be our lot however poor,
Each dawn is as a welcome door;
Each humblest act the wondrous key
Of infinite opportunity.

Dora Read Goodale.

No higher praise can be given to any life than to say it has been faithful. No one could ask for a nobler epitaph than the simple words, "He was faithful." This will be the commendation given in the great account to those who have made the most of their talents: "Thou hast been faithful." Faithfulness should therefore be the aim in all our living. It is not great things that God expects or requires of us, unless he has given us great gifts and opportunities; all he requires is faithfulness. He gives us certain talents, puts us in certain relations, assigns to us certain duties, and then asks us to be faithful—

nothing more. The man with the plain gifts and the small opportunities is not expected to do the great things that are required of the man with the brilliant talents and the large opportunities.

We should get this truth fixed deeply in our mind, that God asks of no one anything more than simple faithfulness. Faithfulness is not the same in any two persons. In the man who has five talents there must be a great deal more outcome to measure up to the standard of faithfulness than in the man who has but two talents. Faithfulness is simply being true to God and making the most of one's life. Of those who have received little, only little is required. Where much has been received much is required. Never is anything impossible or unreasonable expected of any one. If we are simply faithful, we shall please God.

Jesus said of Mary, after her act of love, when men murmured at her, "She hath done what she could." What had she done? Very little, we would say. She loved Jesus truly and deeply. Then she brought a flask of precious ointment and broke the flask, pouring the sacred nard upon her Lord's tired feet, those feet which soon were to be nailed to the cross. That was one of the ways love was shown in those days.

What good did it do? That was the question the disciples asked. We know it wonderfully comforted the Saviour's sorrowful heart. Amid almost universal hatred, here was one of his friends who believed in him still. Amid madding enmity here was one who loved him. While other hands were weaving a crown of thorns for his brow, to be put on him five days hence, and others still were forging cruel nails to drive through his feet, Mary's hands were pouring ointment on his head and bathing his feet with the nard. Who will say that Mary's act did no good? We cannot know how her sweet, pure, loyal love blessed that holy life in its anguish. It seemed a little thing, but little thing though it was, it gave the heart of Jesus a thrill of joy that made him stronger for all the dark, terrible days that followed, and for that blackest, terriblest day of all, when he hung on the cross.

Call nothing little which gives comfort, strength, courage or cheer to a manly heart. A kindly hand-shake, when despair was wrapping a soul in folds of gloom, and driving it to madness, saved a life from suicide. A sympathetic word, when one was about to yield to a temptation which would have left shame, dishonor and ruin, rescued a soul and saved it for

purity, beauty and heaven. We do not know what is little. What seems so small to us as to be almost insignificant, may have infinite and eternal consequences, when all its harvest of results are gathered up in the judgment. "She hath done what she could." That was blessed praise for Mary. That is all Christ asks of any of us—just the best we can do. He never asks anything we cannot do.

But let us not forget that our Master always does expect and require of each of us what we can do—all that we can do. Faithful as a measure of requirement is not a pillow for indolence. It is not a letting down of obligations to a low standard, to make life easy. Faithfulness is a lofty standard. "She hath done what she could" is the highest commendation any lips can ever speak. It meant that with her resources Mary could have done nothing better that hour, nothing that would have meant more to her Lord and Friend. The man with the one talent, who made no use of his talent, keeping it in a napkin, received no commendation, "Faithful servant!" He had done nothing with his life and he lost all that he had. Not to use what we have is to lose it. The stars in the heavens would rot, says some one, if they did not move. Less than our best is unfaithful-

ness. With all Christ's patience he does require of us our best.

This divine law of faithfulness applies to all callings in life and to every kind of work. Some people try to make a separation between sacred and secular matters, as if religion applied only to part of a man's life. But there is a moral quality in everything that a moral being does. The judgment of God will take in not only specifically religious acts, but also all that belongs in one's business or trade.

In a recent story* the young minister calls to see one of his members who is a shoemaker. He finds him busy at his work and sits down in his shop for a talk. "I am glad to see men who can use the humblest vocation for the glory of God, as you are doing," said the minister, as the conversation went on. The shoemaker replied saying there was no such thing in this wide world as a humble vocation. "You are a minister of the gospel, by the grace of God. I am a shoemaker, by the grace of God. If I make good shoes I shall get just as much credit in the hereafter as you will for being a faithful pastor. All work is noble and honorable."

He went on to say that the minister would

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* Hiram Golf's Religion.

carry up to the judgment seat a fair sample of the sermons he had preached, and he, the shoemaker, would carry up a fair sample of the shoes he had made. Both would be judged by the quality of their work. Goodness is goodness, whether you find it in the mill-owner or in a spindle-tender. The old shoemaker picked up a pair of shoes which had been left for mending. "If that boy should catch cold some day and get pneumonia, his father, who is poor, would have a doctor's bill to pay, and might lose the child. I propose to mend the shoes as though my salvation depended on it. I can't afford, as a child of God, with a hope of heaven, to put poor work into that job, for much depends on it. I would not like to meet that boy up yonder and have him tell me he died because I was not a faithful shoemaker. Do you think a vocation is a humble one when it deals with the health and life of our fellow-creatures?"

A man is a plumber. Some one says "Religion has nothing to do with plumbing." But really it has a great deal to do with it. The health of a family depends largely upon the character of the plumbing in their house. If it is defective, and typhoid fever or diphtheria creeps into the happy home, causing suffering

and perhaps death, will God take no account of the plumber's negligence? No matter how good a man he may be, how consistent in his life and character, how earnest in Christian service, he has proved unfaithful in the business of his life, bringing disaster upon a household.

Or a man is a bricklayer. In building the flues in a house he is careless at one point, near the end of a wooden beam, not making his work perfectly safe. One night, years afterward, there is a cry of fire in the house, and, in the terror and confusion, a child's life is lost. The origin of the fire was a defective flue. Was not the bricklayer responsible? Should there be no religion in the work of the man on whose faithfulness the safety of our dwellings depends?

A carriage-builder uses flawed iron in an axle. The carriage is used for years by a family, bearing its precious burden without accident. But one day, in coming down a steep hill, one of the wheels strikes a stone and in the jarring the axle is broken, leading to a serious accident, in which several persons are injured. When the iron broke, the flaw was discovered. Is there no place for religion in carriage-building? Is not the man who makes axles for carriages his brother's keeper?

We may apply the truth to the work of each man and woman. One works in a factory, one in a machine-shop, one in an office, one in a store, one in a school. One man is a physician, one a lawyer, one a merchant, one a mechanic, one a minister. Whatever our calling is, we cannot be wholly faithful to God unless we do our work as well as we can. To slur it is to do God's work badly. To neglect it is to rob God. The work of the universe is not quite complete without our part of its work well done, however small that part may be. The faithfulness which Christ requires must reach to the way the child gets his lessons and recites them; to the way the dressmaker and the tailor sew their seams; to the way the blacksmith welds the iron and shoes the horse; to the way the carpenter builds his house; to the way the clerk represents the goods and measures and weighs them. "Be thou faithful" rings from heaven in every ear, in every smallest piece of work we are doing.

Another application of the lesson is to promises. There are some people who make promises freely, but as easily fail to keep them. Surely we ought to keep sedulous watch over ourselves in this regard. Parents and older persons need to think seriously of the effect of

failing to keep a promise made to a child. "One of the keenest sorrows of childhood," says one, "is the disappointment that comes from unfulfilled promises. . . . A promise carelessly made to a child will often be cherished and depended on for many months, and when at last it bears no fruit, the child's soul receives a wound which is very slow to heal." It is told of Dr. Livingstone, that once he had promised to send some curiosities from Africa to a little boy in England, and had forgotten to do so. The boy's father was writing to Dr. Livingstone, and the little fellow added a postscript, reminding his friend of his promise. Dr. Livingstone was overwhelmed with dismay and confusion when he read the postscript. He hastened to repair the wrong he had done, and refers to the matter again and again, with evident pain, feeling sure, he says, that the boy would forgive him if he knew how much he had suffered by his fault. This great tenderness in the heart of the great missionary over his failure to keep his promise to the child shows the nobleness of his nature.

It is told also of Sir William Napier, that when walking one day in the country, he met a little girl in sore distress over the breaking of a bowl she had been carrying. He comforted

the child by telling her that he would give her sixpence to buy another bowl. But he found he had no money, not even sixpence, in his pocket. He then promised to meet the child at the same hour the next day, at the same spot and to bring her the money. The child went away very happy. When Sir William reached home, however, he found an invitation to dine on the morrow with some distinguished people, whom he greatly wished to see. But he declined the invitation at once, telling his family of the promise he had made to the child, and saying, "I cannot disappoint her, for she trusted me implicitly."

That is the true spirit of faithfulness. A promise made to a child, or to the lowliest or most unworthy person, should be kept, no matter how hard it may be to keep it. One of the psalms gives as a mark of a good man, that when he sweareth, even to his own hurt, he changeth not. "I entirely forget my promise," one says, as if forgetting it were much less a sin than deliberately breaking it. We have no right to forget any promise we make to another. It is a noble thing to find one whom we can absolutely depend on, whose promise we are as sure of as we are of the rising sun, whose simplest word is as good as his oath, who does

just what he says he will do, at the moment he says he will do it.

In learning the lesson of faithfulness we need to train ourselves to unrelaxing self-discipline. We are in danger of being altogether too lenient with our faults and too tolerant of our sins, making too little of our failures and not holding ourselves rigidly to account. The only safety lies in habits of utmost exactness. It is related of a young book-keeper, that just as his summer vacation was about to begin, he found a mistake of eight cents in his accounts, which footed up half a million. Instead of going on his vacation the young man set to work to find the error. He found it, after two weeks' search, thus losing his entire vacation. His victory over himself made him ever after a stronger man. If there were more of such self-discipline there would be fewer failures and wrecks of character.

Judge Tourgee, in one of his books, tells of a young soldier, scarce a month from his peaceful home, standing now in the excitement of the field, and asking in a tense whisper, with white, quivering lips, "Do you think there will be a battle?" Almost as he spoke there leaped from a wooded crest, near by, flashing tongues of flame, that brought death to hundreds. Later

in the terrible struggle, this brave boy was still at his post. The weakened line was wavering, however, and the lad's brother, an old veteran, saw it and rushed for an instant from his post of duty, and sought along the trembling line for the boy he loved as his own soul. As his eyes fell upon him, faithful still, he laid his hand upon the lad's shoulder and said: "Be a man, John." The tide of battle ebbed and flowed, and when the moon rose after that tumultuous day, its pale beams shone on John's face, white and cold, lying where he had stood, his feet the very foremost in the pallid ranks toward the foe.

We are all in a battle which will not end for us until, in our turn, the moon's beams shine down upon each of our faces, as we sleep on the field. We must be faithful. Then at the end, when we stand before God, and make report of what we have done, we shall hear the approving word: "Thou hast been faithful." It will be better to have that at the close of life —"Thou hast been faithful"—than to wear earth's brightest crown, and be unfaithful—failing God.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Law of Use and Disuse.

We thank thee, Master of our lives, to whom
At last we all, from varying earthly task,
Shall render our account, that thou wilt ask
No trivial daily record as we come;
That what we gain in thoughts and deeds of love
Throughout our service, be it long or short,
Is the one record that shall then be brought
To test our fitness for the life above.
To us the weary hours and days seem now
Too often but an idle tale. We grieve
O'er passing moments and forget that thou
Dost reckon not by time, and that thy love,
In summing up our human lives at last,
Will count the heart-throbs, not the moments passed.

Mary G. Slocum.

We are doing business in this world for Christ. Each one of us has something of his, a pound, which he has entrusted to us to trade with as his agent. Our life itself, with all its powers, its endowments, its opportunities, its privileges, its blessings, is our pound. We are not our own. We are not in this world merely to have a good time for a few years.

The Law of Use and Disuse

Life is a trust. We are not done with it when we have lived it through to its last day. We must render an account of it to him who gave it to us. Our business is to show gains through our trading with our Lord's money. We are required to make the most possible of our life.

People often speak of the solemnity of dying. But it is a great deal more solemn thing to live. Dying is only giving back into God's hand his own gift,—life,—and if we have lived well, dying is victory, is glory, the trampling of life's opaque dome to fragments, as our soul bursts into blessedness. But it is living that is serious and solemn. Life, to its last particle, is our Lord's property entrusted to us to be used so that it shall grow. Then comes the judgment, with its accounting and its rewards. We shall have to look up into our Lord's face and tell him what we have done with the pound, the life that has been entrusted to us to keep and to use.

The Lord does not put a large amount of his money into the hand of any one to begin with —only one pound, as the parable has it. It is not much, but it is as much as we are capable of using well at first, until we have acquired more experience. Besides, it is enough to test our faithfulness. If we do well with the little,

he will trust us with more. Doing business with a small amount also trains us so that by and by we may care for a larger sum. Most successful business men had very little to begin with. They handled the little well, and it increased into more. Meantime, the men themselves grew into greater ability and wisdom, through experience, until now they manage a large business as easily as at first they managed the little they had.

It is the same in all life. The child at school has but little mental ability, but it has enough to begin with, enough to show its spirit and test its faithfulness. If it uses the little well, the ability will increase. God gives into no man's hand at the beginning a finely-trained, fully-developed mind. The great poets, artists, philosophers and writers of the world began with only one pound. Christ gives no one at the start a noble, full-statured Christian character, with spiritual graces all blossoming out. The most saintly Christian began with very little saintliness. The most useful man in the church began with a very small and imperfect sort of usefulness. Those whose influence for good now touches thousands of lives, extends over whole communities or fills an entire country, or the world, had nothing to begin with but one

little pound of capacity, which the Master entrusted to them.

The growth of the life depends upon the degree of energy and faithfulness shown by each person. In the parable, one man's pound made ten pounds more. Another's made five pounds. The first of these men is a type of those who make the most possible of their life. This man did not fret because he had so little to begin with. He began with enthusiasm, with energy, and with the utmost diligence and fidelity, to make the most of his one pound. As he used it, it increased. The increase he also used and the money grew until when his lord returned he laid down at his feet a gain of a thousand per cent.

The high places in life have not come to men by chance or by any providential partiality in the distribution of the gifts and favors of life. They have all been won by energy, faithfulness and toil.

We find these ten-pound servants also among the followers of Christ. They are those Christians who, from the beginning, strive to reach the best things in divine grace. They set their ideal of obedience to Christ at the mark of perfectness. They seek to follow Christ with their whole heart. They are faithful to every

duty without regard to its cost. They strive to be like Christ in all the elements and features of his character. They give their whole energy to the work and service of Christ. So these men and women grow at last into a saintliness, a spiritual beauty, and a power of usefulness and of influence, by which they are set apart among Christians, shining with brighter lustre than other stars in the galaxy. Their one pound has made other ten.

The other servant whose pound made five pounds also did well, but not so well as the first. He did not do all that he might have done with his lord's money. He was not so earnest as his fellow-servant, not so active, not so diligent, not so unsparing in toil, not so persistent in endeavor, not so heroic in conquering obstacles and difficulties. This man is a type of a great mass of people in the world. They are good, but not so good as they might have been. They do well with their life, but not so well as they might have done. They might have made ten pounds for their Lord, while they made only five.

It is so in trades and all business. Many are satisfied just to get along. They work as few hours as possible. They are self-indulgent. As a consequence they make little progress

through the years. They are no better workmen, no better business men, no better physicians or preachers, at fifty than they were at thirty. They are fairly prosperous, but they do not do their best. The same is true in schools. There are many who do well, but who might do far better. They are easy-going, indisposed to toil and struggle. They come at last with five pounds' gain in their hand, when they might have brought ten. Many people do not make the most possible of their spiritual gifts and privileges. They grow in grace, but their path might have been like the shining light. They might have more of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, more of the gentleness, the sweetness, the beauty of the Lord, in their lives. They might be of more use to Christ. They bring five pounds' increase when they might have brought ten.

The principle on which the rewards of life are given may be called the law of use. One man brought his ten pounds gained by diligent and faithful using of the one which had been entrusted to him to trade with. He had shown such ability and fidelity in caring for the little that had been left in his hands, that his lord now put more of his interests in his keeping. He had done well with money: now the care

of cities was entrusted to him. That is, one who does well with a small trust is rewarded with a larger one; and the reward is proportionate to the diligence and faithfulness one has shown in the smaller trust.

The law of increase is the law of use. "Thy pound hath made ten pounds more." By using the little we have, we get more. This is true in all life. It is true in the business world. The poor boy uses his first shilling wisely and soon has two shillings. He goes on investing, trading, toiling, and his money grows until he is a millionaire. It is the same in mental growth. The young people start in school with nothing. They struggle with hard problems, year after year, until at last they come out with trained minds, disciplined powers. Use has brought its reward. The same prevails in spiritual life. The way to get more love is to love: love grows by loving. The way to become stronger in resisting evil and overcoming temptation is always to resist and to conquer. Every battle we win makes us braver and a better soldier. Every effort we make lifts us a little nearer to God.

The way to become more gentle and loving is to keep our heart's affections always in exercise. A kind feeling put into an act does not

exhaust the kindness and empty the fountain, but leaves more kindness in the heart. A young man finds it hard to rise in a meeting and read one verse or offer a prayer of one sentence. He does his duty, however, and soon he is an acceptable speaker, and in a few years he is preaching the gospel with eloquence and power. Use developed his gifts.

The building of character should be our central aim in life. Business, school, home, church, reading, pleasure, struggle, work, sorrow—all are but means to the one end. It matters little how much money a man made last year, but it is of vital importance what mark last year's business made upon his character. The increase of one's fortune is of but small importance in comparison with the growth of one's manhood. Everything we do leaves an impression upon us as well as on the work we are doing. We are building life all the while. The thing we do may be a blessing in the world, but apart from this it affects ourself. A man's work may fail; yet even in failure the work on his character goes on. If we do our very best, though nothing else may come of it in the world, yet in ourselves there cannot but be noble result. Faithfulness and energy never fail of their reward in character, even though the hands be

empty when life is done. "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever." The reward comes in the doing, not in what we gather in our doing:

"In the strength of the endeavor,
In the temper of the giver,
In the loving of the lover,
Lies the hidden recompense.

In the sowing of the sower,
In the fading of the flower,
In the fleeting of each hour,
Lurks eternal recompense."

Thus it is that using produces growth, increase. Use what you have, and it will become more. Trade with your pound and it will multiply. The law of growth is the law of use. So we see that the reward that God gives for faithfulness is not ease, but enlarged responsibility. So long as we do well what God wants us to do, and are faithful in what of his he entrusts to us, he still gives us more duty and adds to our stewardship.

Then loss comes through disuse. One man brought his pound, carefully wrapped up. He had done nothing with it. This man is not described as specially wicked. He was not condemned for what he did, but for what he did

not. He did not use his gift in harming others. He did not misuse God's gift. His sin lay in not using. He did not embezzle. He did not gamble away his pound. He did not waste it in any foolish speculation. He kept it securely. One day the master came again. The servants were all called to report what they had gained with the portions left in their hands. Then this poor man hunted up his pound and brought it out from its hiding-place. Unrolling the napkin, there was the money, bright, shining gold, undimmed. "Here is thy pound which I kept." But that was not what the Lord wanted—he wanted gains made by trading. So the pound was taken away from the servant who had made no use of it.

Here then we get our lesson. Not to use is to lose. The penalty upon uselessness is the loss of power to be useful. There is an Oriental story of a merchant who gave to each of two friends a sack of grain to keep till he should call for it. Years passed, and at last he claimed his property. One of his friends led him to a field of waving grain, and said: "This is all yours." The other took him to a granary, and pointed out to him as his a rotten sack full of wasted grain. Use yielded a golden harvest and honor. Disuse yielded only decay and dishonor.

It is something appalling to think of the possibilities of people's minds—faculties which by proper use might have been developed to brilliant power, but which, because never developed by use, have lain wrapped up in a napkin and at last have perished altogether in the brain. Men fail to exercise their spiritual vision and live in darkness, until their soul's eyes die out and they cannot see spiritual things if they would. Not to love God in life's earlier days takes away from the heart at length the power to love him. This is the solution of that mystery of the hardening of the heart which perplexes so many Bible readers. Long-time shutting of the heart against God leaves it incapable of opening. The power to love, unexercised, dies out.

There is a truth here which ought to startle us, if we are not living at our very best. Not to believe on Christ—continuance in unbelief and rejection—is at length to lose the power to believe. Not to lift up the heart and the eyes to God—continuance in thus turning away from God—is at length to be incapable of loving God. Not to follow the Christ—persistence in refusing to be his disciple—is at length to find one's self unable, even under the most fearful pressure of judgment and eternity, to become even Christ's

lowliest follower. The spiritual powers long unused die out, and then a man is dead while he lives.

In the Koran there is a story of certain dwellers by the Dead Sea to whom Moses was sent with messages from God. But they sneered at him and refused to listen to his message. When next found, the Koran says, they had all become apes. By not using their souls they lost them.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Prayer for Divine Searching.

Lord, many times I am aweary quite
  Of my own self, my sin and vanity;
Yet be not thou, or I am lost outright,
  Weary of me.

And hate against myself I often bear,
  And enter with myself in fierce debate;
Take thou my part against myself, nor share
  In that just hate.

Best friends might loathe us, if what things perverse
  We know of our own selves they also knew;
Lord, Holy One! if thou who knowest worse,
  Should loathe us, too!

Archbishop Trench.

In one of the psalms there is an intense and deeply earnest prayer for divine searching: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." If we make this prayer sincerely, out of our heart, it will bring us into very close quarters with God. It will open every

chamber, every corner, every nook and cranny of our life to the eye that is omniscient.

It takes courage to pray this prayer. Not all men can do it. Many people fear to look into their own heart. If by some divine flash we were made to see ourselves as we are, all the evil that is in us, all the hideous things that lurk in the depths of our being, our faces would blanch into deathly paleness.

It takes boldness to ask God to search one's inner life and show one one's sins. It takes honesty, too, to pray this prayer. It means that every wrong thing we find in our heart, under the calcium light of God's word and Spirit, we will give up and cast out. Some people do not want to find their sins, because they do not want to give them up. We cannot pray this prayer if we are not willing and eager to have Christ save us from whatever evil way, whatever sinful habit, feeling, disposition, or temper we discover in ourselves.

There is another thing to mark in this prayer. We ask God to search us. An ancient, much-praised maxim was, "Know thyself." But no man can really know himself, in the depths of his being, unless God holds the lamp to shine in the darkness. None but God can search us and show us to ourselves.

This is not a prayer that our neighbors may search us. Men are willing enough, ofttimes, to judge their fellow-men, to expose their faults, and proclaim their sins. It is easier for most of us to confess other people's sins than our own. The Pharisee was quite free in searching the publican and declaring his wrong-doings, though he said nothing of his own. We might find those who would be willing to search us and point out our blemishes, but this is not what we are taught to do. Men's judgments are imperfect, sometimes uncharitable, even unjust. There are lives that go down under men's condemnation whom love would save. At the best, men are only very partial judges. They cannot see our motives, and ofttimes they condemn as wrong that which is noble and beautiful; or they approve as right and praiseworthy that which before God is unworthy. It is not enough to ask men to search us and to try us. If they should approve and commend us their approval might be of no value to us.

But there is One who is perfect in wisdom, love and righteousness, and whose judgments are unerring. We should always want to know what he thinks of our acts, words and thoughts. Though all the world applaud what we do, and praise us without stint, if on his face there

is no mark of approval—if we see there the shadow of disapproval, what a mockery is men's applause! If the world sneer, condemn and blame; if men have only scorn and reproach; and if meanwhile, turning our eyes toward the heavenly throne, we see in the divine face the smile of approval, what need we care for the frowns of men? It is to God we should turn for the searching of our life. No human approval can bless when he does not bless. No human sentence can bind when he sets at liberty.

It is better always to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of men. God is kindlier and juster than men. Nobody understands us as Christ does. Nobody knows our infirmities as Christ knows them, and no one has such patience with them as he has. He knows human life—this blessed Lord of ours—by actual experience. He was tempted in all points like as we are; he knows how hard it is to resist temptation and to be good. He knows all the elements that enter into human struggle, and therefore is fitted for sympathy. We need not be afraid to open our heart to him, for he will never be unjust with us. We need not fear to ask him to search us, for if we truly desire to give up our sins when we discover them, we shall find him most merciful and gracious.

All our life is open to God's eye. The old psalm makes this wonderfully clear. "Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine uprising." God's eye is upon us in our every movement, in our resting and in our working. "Thou understandest my thought afar off." He knows our thought not only when it has taken final form, but in its first dim rising. He sees the whole working of our mind, all our imaginations, feelings, desires, the secret springs of our heart, out of which flow all the streams of thought, fancy, wish and act. Sometimes we come to the brink and look down into the depths of our own being, and we see things that there appal us. We get glimpses of motives which seem to blot the beauty of our fairest deeds. We see shadowy shapes of evil lurking there that are hideous to our eyes. We find in the abysses of our own nature possibilities of sin that startle us. But all that our eyes see in our hearts, even in glimpses, God sees continually, and far more. He knows us infinitely better than we can know ourselves.

"Thou searchest out my path and my lying down,
And art acquainted with all my ways.
For there is not a word in my tongue,
But, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether."

God does not have to wait, as our neighbors

do, until we speak to know what is in our mind. The silent man may conceal his thoughts from his fellows, but he cannot conceal them from God. Unspoken thoughts are open to him. Words may hide the truth, disguise it or color it, but God knows the real thought that is in the word. Neither in the depths of the blue heavens, nor in the dark abyss of the grave, can one hide away from God. If we could take the morning sunbeams for wings and fly away on them with all the swiftness of light to the remotest bounds of space, we could not get beyond the reach of the divine eye. If we creep into darkness so deep and dense that no human eye can see us, still God sees us as clearly as if we stood in the bright noon-day sunshine. Darkness hides not from him. Night shines to his eye as brightly as day.

To many people this thought of God's omniscience is one to produce only fear and terror. They wish they could hide from him, or veil their life from him, and flee to some place where he could not find them. They do not think of this truth as a comforting one, but as one to alarm them. To those who are living in sin, unreconciled to God, it surely is full of startling terror. Sin always wants to hide from God. But to believers in Christ this truth of the om-

niscience of God is one of great comfort. It is divine love that knows all our thoughts afar off and our words before they are spoken, and that besets us behind and before. When we are told that we cannot flee from God's presence nor be in any place where he is not, it is meant to be a comfort. No greater blessing could be imagined than this. We can never be cast beyond the reach of his eye, nor out of his presence, nor beyond the clasp of his love. If by some sudden calamity we should be swept away to the uttermost parts of the earth, where no human friend can see us, we would still find God there, and his hand would lead us, and his right hand would hold us. Thus the truth is one of immeasurable comfort and blessing to us.

The psalm speaks also of the preciousness of God's thoughts toward his people. It is wonderful that the great God should think about us at all. It seems impossible, when we remember his holiness and our sinfulness, his glory and our littleness, that he should ever think of us. It is pleasant for us to learn that some one on earth whom we esteem highly has been thinking about us. The greater the person is, the more honored and distinguished among men, the more does it mean to us to discover that he has been thinking about us, that he is interested in us, that he cares

for us in our need and trouble, and that he has been planning and thinking for our good.

The most shining hour in any life is the one in which the truth breaks upon the consciousness that God loves, when one can say, "God loves me." One of the sweetest comforts that ever comes to any one on earth is the revelation, "God is thinking about me as really as ever my mother did." It is true, too. God thinks about us. He is our Father, and cannot but think of his children. Nor is it a mere occasional thought that he gives to us; more in number than are the sands are his thoughts toward us. No earthly father thinks about his best beloved child so often as he goes about, busy in the affairs of his life, as God thinks of each one of us, even when caring for all the worlds. When we are in joy he thinks of us, watches us and breathes his benedictions into our gladness. When we are in danger, he thinks about us, and reaches out his hand to deliver us. When we are in sorrow, he thinks of us, pitying us as a father pities his child, comforting like a mother, with compassionate love.

One who was wrecked tells how he clung in the water to a piece of a mast, but floating off in the waves was soon utterly alone in the midst of the sea. He says the sense of his utter lone-

liness was the most awful element in his experience in those dreadful hours. In all the wide expanse there was no eye to see him, no heart to give him a thought of care or pity. But God's eye saw him even there; God thought about him. Wherever we are, in whatever loneliness, in whatever distress or danger, we may say, "I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me."

No doubt there are things in us of which God does not approve. His eyes see blots in our fairest deeds. It is said that the finest polishing men can give to steel, to a needle, for example, reveals, under a microscope, roughnesses and irregularities which greatly mar its perfectness. So, to God's eye, the most lovely human life reveals many flaws and blemishes. No doubt our most devout worship has in it much sin. Our most unselfish love is stained by selfishness. Our best work is blotched by evil. A painter saw an ugly stain on the wall he had been frescoing. He took a wet cloth to remove it, but the cloth was itself soiled and left a blotch worse than that the painter had sought to remove. May it not be so with much of our work on other lives? Our own hands are unclean, and they stain where we thought to cleanse and leave touches of beauty. We know

enough of our own heart to be sure that all is not with us as it ought to be. Are we willing to have God search us and try our thoughts? Then are we willing to put away all the evil that God, by his word and Spirit, may disclose to us in ourselves?

If we are truly seeking to be fashioned into the divine image, nothing must be allowed to remain in our life which is not entirely in harmony with the divine thought for us. The smallest flaw that we discover must be taken out. The least speck of fault must be corrected. The most minute line of new possible likeness to Christ that we discern we must seek to put into our character. We should be eager, therefore, always, to have God search us, that we may be led ever upward toward holier life.

It is one of the infinite blessings of our life that God does search us and try our ways. If he did not we should never get home. In our lives, at the best, there is a great deal of chaff to a very little wheat; if the chaff is not gotten out in some way, we shall never be fit for God's garner. Winnowing may be a painful process, but it is a blessed one, for in the end it leaves us cleansed and prepared for the holy life of heaven. So when God searches us and winnows us, we should be humble and quiet before him,

submitting to him. We should continually make our prayer to him that he would search us and try us, and see if there be any wicked way in us, and then lead us in the way everlasting.

"Thou Searcher of all hearts, look down and see,
Not if the chaff doth most abound in me,
But if there be a tithe of grain for thee—
A tithe for thee, in all the unfruitful place!
All the day long before the winds of grace
My chaff upriseth in thy patient face.
My lying down, my path, my ways how poor,
My wasted moments husks bestrew my floor;
And still thou searchest by the garner door.
Content to stoop, if so upon the ground
One grain of truth, one ear of love be found,
So doth thy patience, dearest Lord, abound!"

CHAPTER XIX.

Remembering Christ's Words.

They fear not life's rough storms to brave,
Since thou art near and strong to save;
Nor shudder e'en at death's dark wave,
  Because they cling to thee.
Blest is my lot whate'er befall;
What can disturb me, who appal;
While, as my strength, my rock, my all,
  Saviour, I cling to thee?

Charlotte Elliott.

Memory is a wonderful faculty. It is a hand that writes down on an invisible scroll a record of all the things we do, all the thoughts that pass through our mind, all the impressions that are made upon us. Memory is meant to give us great pleasure. It would gather into the storehouses of the soul all the precious things of the passing years and keep them there forever. The joys of childhood are thus treasured, to shed their sweetness on the life in the times of toil, care and sorrow, which come in the later years. The glad things in the days of youth and sunshine are stored away to become lamps

to shine when it grows dark outside, or to be like singing-birds in the bosom when earth's music is hushed.

It is wonderful how sweet memories of better days mitigate the sorrows and pains of life when misfortune or trial has stripped off the things that gave joy. There is a story of a young man who was informed that in a few months he must become blind, and who instantly set out to find and look upon the loveliest things in the world, that in his days of darkness he might have the memories of the beautiful scenes to cheer him.

Thus memory may help us to prepare for times of sorrow by gathering up the sunshine and storing it away in our heart. The great coal-fields in the earth are only memories of wonderful ages in the past, when vast forests and dense masses of vegetation grew and fell into the ground and were covered up and there held in store for service in these later ages. Now the treasured sunshine lights and warms our homes. Like service does memory perform when it holds in its storehouses the beautiful things of life's bright summer days, to give light and warmth when winter comes with its long nights and its cold and storm.

But memory stores up the bitter with the

sweet. If we live negligently, carelessly, sinfully, we lay up recollections which can cause only sorrow, pain and shame. The secret of a happy life is a well-watched past. Every to-day is the harvest of yesterday. The only way to make to-morrow's memories rich and sweet is to live to-day a pure, obedient, gentle, unselfish, helpful life.

There is an exhortation which says, "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus." To remember in this sense, is also to keep, to do, to obey. It does one little good merely to remember the words which Christ speaks, and not to take them into the heart and life. There is not a line of truth in the Bible which is not meant in some way to affect the life and character. Bible teachings are the gleams of heaven's light touching the earth. There is not a truth in the Bible which, if received into the heart, will not leave its impress in some way upon the spirit, the life, the disposition, the conduct, the character.

What becomes of all the sermons? Many of us hear at least two every Sabbath. Every sermon ought to be a message from God. The preacher is God's messenger, or he is nothing. If he speaks only his own words and does not speak for God, he is not a preacher. They

must be words of life, too, which he speaks. "The words that I speak unto you," said Jesus, "they are spirit, and they are life."

God's word is compared by the great Teacher to seed. What follows when the sower goes over his field and scatters his good seed upon the ground? He seems to be only throwing it away. But in each of the little golden grains is a secret of life, that, when the seed becomes soft in the earth, puts out a little point, a tiny sprig, which becomes by and by a stem that shoots up into a stalk of wheat. In the season of harvest the field bears its burden of golden grain.

Jesus tells us what becomes of the sermons. Not all the good seed grows into its appropriate harvest. There are four different ways of receiving the good seed. There are wayside hearers. The ground is trodden down into hardness by many passing feet, until it cannot receive the seed. The golden grains fall upon it, but lie there uncovered and the birds come and take them away. There are stony-ground hearers. A thin layer of surface-soil receives the seed and at once it springs up. But the hot sun blazes down on the place, the thin soil is soon dried, and the green shoots are soon withered and dead. There are the thorny-ground hearers. The soil is good, rich and deep, and

the seed grows luxuriantly. But the ground contains also roots of briers and thorns, and the same rich soil which produces rapid growth in the wheat, fosters also the quicker growing of these briers and thorns, and the wheat is soon so choked that only poor, starved, shriveled grains form on the stalk, none of them growing to perfection. There is also good ground, untrodden, deep-ploughed, clean of the roots of other things. On this soil the seed grows into luxuriance and the harvest waves at length—many times the sowing being reaped from the field.

What becomes of the seed depends on the soil. What becomes of the sermons depends on the hearers. There are hearts like the wayside, trodden down by passing feet, so that no holy word or thought of God finds entrance into them. There are rocky hearts, emotional, promising well for a little while, but not enduring temptation and trial. There are thorny hearts in which grow the roots of other things that choke out the divine seeds. No fruit of the Spirit ripens to anything beautiful in them.

This parable tells what comes of a great deal of the holy seed that is scattered on the earth. Nothing comes of it. The birds get it; the heat withers it; briers and thorns choke it.

But there are also hearts that receive the words of truth, keep them, nourishing them into growths which yield a rich harvest.

We must not forget that all this hearing of the truth leaves a record. There has been invented a curious little machine which, when placed in the rear of a railway-car, registers on a strip of paper every motion of the car, every curve of the track, every unevenness, every decayed or sunken sleeper, every fragment of the history of the train's movement, from the moment it starts till it stops. There is something in each human life that, in like manner, registers all that goes on in the life, every day, every year. It marks all our privileges and opportunities. It tells of every sermon we hear, every good word that falls upon our ear, every shining upon us of the face of Christ, every call to duty, every warning and exhortation, every touch upon our life by the hand of Christ, every influence of friendship, and it also shows our response to all these influences. It is well that we consider what kind of autobiography we are writing these passing days. What does memory enshrine of the words of Christ which we have heard? None of us know how these living words have wrought in our lives. If it were possible to obliterate from our character all that

they have done in us, we should then see what we owe to them. The sun is not so much to the planets as these words of Christ are to our lives.

Think of the comfort we have gotten in sorrow, the light that has made our darkness bright with hopes and has filled our night with stars. Think of the lines of beauty which the words of Christ, like the pencils of a great artist, have left in our lives. We never shall know in this world all that the words of Christ have done in us and for us. Then we cannot know what shall be the influence of these words, repeated by us, on others who may hear them.

> "Never a word is said
> But it trembles in the air,
> And the truant voice has sped
> To vibrate everywhere;
> And perhaps far off in eternal years
> The echo may ring upon our ears."

Perhaps we have resisted the influence of Christ's words in our lives. Some of us grieve over the stained pages, the blotted lines, the failures to be sweet in the time of provocation, to be patient in trial. Christ understands it all. He knows how the lesson has been missed. But he is also our Teacher. He says, "Come unto me; learn of me," and he never grows impatient

of our slow-learning, even of our failures. Here is a little story with a lesson. A teacher says:

He came to my desk with a quivering lip—
The lesson was done.
"Dear teacher, I want a new leaf," he said:
"I have spoiled this one."
In place of the leaf so stained and blotted,
I gave him a new one all unspotted,
And into his sad eyes smiled—
"Do better now, my child."

I went to the Throne with a quivering soul—
The old year was done.
"Dear Father, hast thou a new leaf for me?
I have spoiled this one."
He took the old leaf stained and blotted,
And gave me a new one all unspotted,
And into my sad heart smiled—
"Do better now, my child."

Remembering Christ's words sweetens the life. It keeps the thoughts always fragrant. A drawer was opened and a delicious perfume stole out and filled the room. A grain of musk in the drawer was the secret of it all. So the words of Christ, hidden in a human heart, sweeten all the life. A writer tells the story of a young girl whose spirit grew so wondrously beautiful and gentle, the secret being that one little verse of Scripture was lying like a rich

odor in her heart,—"Whom not having seen, ye love." If we let the word of Christ dwell in us richly it will pour sweetness through all our life, into our thoughts, feelings, affections and emotions, until our whole being is saturated with the rich fragrance. There is no other secret of true, noble, Christ-like character.

There is another Bible "Remember." This time it is a prayer to God, asking him to remember the word on which he had caused his servant to hope. Of course God could never fail to remember any word he has spoken on which any of his children have trusted. We forget too easily the words of the Lord Jesus; but he never forgets a promise he makes.

Men often make promises on which others depend, perhaps staking all their interests and their happiness upon the assurance given to them, only to find at last that the promise has been forgotten. We have all known instances in which one person took another's word, believed what he said, accepted his assurance, giving it implicit confidence—only to learn at length that there was nothing substantial in the promise. But God's least word is true and eternal. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away," said Christ. When a soul takes any word of Christ and builds

a fabric of hope upon it, resting on it, believing that it will be fulfilled, sooner might the stars fall from heaven than that God should forget or fail to fulfill his promise.

In days of war, while the army rested, a bird came and built her nest on the pole of the emperor's tent. When it was time for the army to move, the mother bird was sitting on her eggs. The emperor gave command that the royal tent should be left standing, that the bird might not be disturbed, till her young were hatched and were old enough to fly. The bird had trusted him, building her nest in his tent, and he would not disappoint her trust. If we put our confidence in any word of God, building our hope upon it, he will honor our trust, and his word shall be as an eternal rock. It is not possible that any hope that rests in a divine promise shall ever be put to confusion or be disturbed in its confidence.

"He was better to me than all my hopes,
He was better than all my fears;
He made a bridge of my broken works
And a rainbow of my tears.
The billows that guarded my sea-girt path
But carried my Lord on their crest;
When I dwell on the days of my wilderness march,
I can lean on his love for the rest.

Remembering Christ's Words

There is light for me on the trackless wild,
  As the wonders of old I trace,
When the God of the whole earth went before
  To search me a resting-place.
Never a watch on the dreariest halt
  But some promise of love endears;
I read from the past that my future shall be
  Far better than all my fears."

CHAPTER XX.

The Manliness of Jesus.

One
Of a commanding stature—beautiful—
Bearing such countenance as whoso gazed
Must love, or fear. . . . In admonition calm;
In tender hours each word like music's soul
Heard past the sound! Not ofttimes seen to smile,
More oft to weep; yet of a lofty cheer
Commonly—nay, of playful raillery,
And swift wit, softened with sweet gravity.
Straight-standing like a palm tree; hands and limbs
So moulded that the noblest copy of them:
Among the sons of men fairest and first.

Sir Edwin Arnold.

The question has been raised whether Christianity is not a religion for women rather than for men. It has been claimed by some that the virtues it inculcates are feminine rather than masculine; that it does not appeal to the manly instincts and sentiments as it does to the womanly; that its principles and qualities are not those recognized among men as belonging to the

truest and sturdiest manhood. There is, at least, a widespread impression that in actual experience Christianity is not making the best possible men. That is what the world charges. It says Christianity's men are wanting in the stalwart qualities, that they are sentimental, weak, and not always unalterably true, not always upright, lacking in virile force.

No doubt there are in Jesus all the gentler qualities which we think of as belonging to woman. But are not these very graces adornments also of manly character? Is it a shame for a man to be kindly, tender-hearted, patient, sympathetic? Yet while these gentler qualities undoubtedly appear in the character of Jesus, no less are there in him the elements of strength, courage, heroism, justice, unflinching integrity. It takes both to make complete manliness.

F. W. Robertson says that Christ's heart had in it the blended qualities of both sexes. "There is in him," he says, "the woman heart as well as the manly brain." There is something very beautiful in this thought, that in Jesus whatever is best and truest in both man and woman is found. A woman who is seeking for whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely in womanhood, the graces of refined character—gentleness, sweetness, lovingness—

finds all these qualities in Jesus Christ. On the other hand, a man who is looking for whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are honorble, the elements of noble manhood, will also find these qualities in Christ. He was the Son of man,—not the son of a man, but the Son of man, of humanity. In him all the excellences of manhood, as planned by God, found their perfection.

He was born of the seed of David, but he was not a Jew. He had no national peculiarity. As Robertson says, further, "Once in this world's history was born a Man. Once in the roll of ages, out of innumerable failures, from the stock of human nature one bud developed itself into a faultless flower. One perfect specimen of humanity has God exhibited on earth." Other men, the best, the truest, the worthiest, have in them only a little fragment of a complete life; but in Christ is the perfect humanity, as if the life-blood of every nation were in his veins, and that which is best and truest in every man, and that which is tenderest, gentlest and purest in every woman were in his character.

What are the manly qualities? Thomas Hughes says courage is the foundation of all true manliness. He means not mere physical courage, which one may have and yet be a

moral coward, but that courage which adheres to the right, quietly, firmly, in the face of all danger and all antagonism, and goes straight on, with unwavering persistence, to its goal. Do we find courage in Jesus? Recall the meaning of his mission. He came into the world to destroy the works of the devil. He was the second Adam, standing for the race. The first Adam had failed and fallen. What the consequences of ruin and sorrow were, we know in a little measure. Now Jesus came to fight the battle over, to reclaim what had been lost. The interests of the whole human race were in his hands that day as the heavens opened and the Spirit came down upon him.

Suppose he had failed. But he did not fail. He met terrible antagonism. He went from his baptism into the wilderness, where he endured terrific assaults from Satan. Suppose he had failed then; what would have been the consequence? But he met the tempter in fierce battle and stood like a rock. So it was through all his life. He never wavered in his purpose to be true. He had his year of popularity—a sorer test of moral courage, ofttimes, than opposition. Many men yield to the seductions of flattery and favor, and fail to be true, who in the storm of enmity are faithful as the compass.

But Jesus was not swayed by popularity, was never tempted aside from the straight path.

Then opposition came. The crowds began to forsake him. The rulers were against him. Enemies gathered in increasing number. The end was drawing nigh, and he knew what the end would be. The shadow of the cross fell upon his soul that day when he was being baptized. Every step of his life was toward Calvary. Yet as the plots thickened, as the shadows deepened, he wavered not. He set his face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem though he knew what waited there for him. Never before nor since has the world seen any other such trial of courage as was Christ's. He was standing for us men and our salvation and he faltered not in the testing.

We praise the heroism of the soldier who stands unflinching at the risk of death, in defence of his country. We praise the heroes at all life's posts of danger, who are faithful to their trust. That is well. But the loftiest heroism of the ages was that of Jesus.

Strength is another quality of manliness. It is good to be physically strong. But one may be a Hercules in body and a pigmy in moral strength. Samson could carry off city gates, but could not withstand the temptations of

idleness and ease. The strength of many men is marred by weakness of some sort. We say, "Every man has his weak point." But you will search in vain in the story of Jesus for any betrayal of weakness in him. We see his majestic strength, side by side with his courage, in his conflicts with the tempter, in his persistent devotion to the divine will, in his blamelessness and sinlessness amid all the seductions of life. Everywhere we see him, he is kingly.

Take his self-control as a token of his strength. The truly strong man is he who has strong capacities,—feelings, passions, powers,—and has perfect mastery over them. No matter how great a man may be in abilities, what tremendous energies he may carry in his life, if he is not able to control them, he is pitiably weak. The strong man has mighty internal forces, a soul of strength, intense passions, feelings, tempers, all under perfect control. Jesus stood this test. In him all human powers reached their highest development, and then he was perfect master of himself. He was never betrayed by excitement, by injustice, by torture, to speak a word unadvisedly. He never lost his temper. He never grew impatient. He never spoke rashly. He never showed envy or resentment. He never fretted, never com-

plained, never was disturbed in the calm of his soul by outward circumstances. He stood quietly on the boat in the midnight storm. He faced the gibbering maniac among the tombs, as if he had been an innocent child. He went in and out among the hostile Jews as quietly as if they had been his friends.

Think of his self-control in suffering. Never have the heavens bent over any other pain so deep and terrible as was the pain of Christ in the garden and on the cross. We sometimes think our sorrows are bitter, but they are nothing to those which Jesus endured. We have hints of the almost unbearable burden of his heart in the strong cryings which came from Gethsemane, and in the word of forsakenness which breaks from his lips on the cross. But through all his ineffable sufferings he maintained the most perfect calm. He never murmured. His peace was never once broken. Call you it not manly strength which endured so quietly such incomprehensible suffering?

Or think of his bearing under wrong and enmity. From the beginning of his public ministry he met injustice. He was rejected by those he sought to help. Toward the close these antagonisms became more bitter. But he endured them all with heroic patience. He

never showed the slightest fear. He never grew angry. Recall his bearing on his trial, his silence before the council, before Pilate, before Herod. Think of his silence and patient submission, when crowned with thorns, mocked, scourged, spit upon. It takes a great deal more strength to bear indignities and reproaches quietly and sweetly than it does to resent them, to resist them, to lift up voice and hand against them, especially if one has power to resist. Yet that was the strength Jesus had.

When about to be crucified, they offered him a stupefying potion, to deaden his consciousness of pain. It was a kindness offered by Jewish women. But he quietly refused it, and accepted the full measure of pain which crucifixion involved, with every sense at its keenest. When the nails were driven through his flesh, the only cry wrung from him was a prayer for the men who were crucifying him. Can any one read the story of Jesus and note the strength which marks it all, and then say that he was not a manly man?

Another element of ideal manliness is true love, or generosity. We may call it by different names. It is large-heartedness. One writer puts it thus: "An open, tolerant and kindly temper, that welcomes confidence, that overlooks faults, that

makes much of any good in other men, that easily forgives wrong,—that is a part of any ordinary notion of manliness." There are men with many strong points who are lacking in this quality. They are suspicious, jealous, envious, secretive, narrow, intolerant. They are impatient of other men's prosperity. They are ungenerous toward other men's faults. They are selfish, exacting, thoughtless, resentful. They are brusque, stern, rasping in their talk. These are blemishes on their manliness. But those who read the story of the life of Jesus find in him at every point the finest spirit of generosity. He was the truest gentleman that ever lived. We have seen his courage and his strength; no less wonderful was the gentle side of his character. He was large-hearted, tolerant of other men, patient with men's weaknesses, open as day in all his acts, gentle and kindly in all his converse.

Those nearest to him saw the most in him to love. This is not always true of men. Close association with them reveals faults, and discloses traits which are unlovely. Too close intimacy is ofttimes fatal to admiration. Many people appear better at a distance than when near. But the life of Christ stood the test of close familiarity. He was gentle, thoughtful, patient,

unselfish, full of sympathy. He loved men, not because he saw beauty in them, but because he wished to do them good. He treated men always with a love which was ready to make any sacrifice to serve them.

The world's idea of what makes a man is not always infallibly true. Some people call brutality manly. In some countries "the code of honor," as it is most falsely called, prevails as a canon of manly behavior. If a man thinks he is insulted, he must send a challenge and meet his alleged insulter in a duel. If he does not, they call him a cringing coward and he loses social caste. In some places virtue in a man is laughed at. They call purity unmanly. But these are low, debased standards. No man who looks God in the face and desires to grow into divine beauty, will call brutality manly, or duelling, or sensuality, or dishonesty, or untruthfulness. The only standard of manly character is that set for us in the moral law, a transcript of the character of God himself.

Jesus brought into the world a new standard of manhood, a divine standard. Once in the ages a manhood grew up which combined in itself all the thought of God for man. Jesus showed the world what it is to be truly a man. He showed us a pattern on which we should all

seek to fashion our lives. He was a true man from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet. His was the truest, noblest, strongest, bravest, most unselfish life that ever was lived on the earth. If we seek to grow into his likeness, we shall climb nearer to God and into the noblest, loftiest reach of humanity.

In the teachings of Jesus, too, we find the precepts which set forth the qualities of true manhood. Any man who feels that the gospel of Christ is not fitted to make men, brave men, strong men, true men, should read over thoughtfully the Sermon on the Mount. It begins with the beatitudes, in which the great Teacher sketches in a few bold strokes, ideal manliness. "Blessed are the poor in spirit." The world would not write that beatitude; yet who will say that true, unconscious humility is not a shining quality in manly character? "Blessed are the meek." Again the world would sneer. "It is craven and cowardly to bear injuries patiently, to forgive wrongs, to repay hatred with love." But true meekness is really manly. It is easier far to let resentment blaze out, to let anger burn, to strike the retaliatory blow. But if strength be a quality of manliness, it takes strength to be meek. If generosity be a manly quality, then meekness is manly. "Blessed are

the pure in heart." The world does not insist on purity as a cardinal element in its manliness. But the more shame for the world. Who will stand up before men, in the clear light of day, and contend that uncleanness of life is not unmanly, that purity of heart is not a radiant quality in true manliness?

All Christ's teachings, if accepted and obeyed, will help toward the truest manliness. There is nothing weak or unmanly in any quality of character which he commends. There is no easy-going virtue such as the world likes. There are no elements that are not pure, true and right. A false-hearted man will not find his ideal manliness in Christ. The gospel deals mercilessly with all shams, all unrealities, all unworthy things in life. It denounces in burning words all untruth. Jesus had no patience with anything that was not right and beautiful.

A story is told of one who, reading thoughtfully the fifth, sixth and seventh chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel, where so many duties that are strange to flesh and blood are taught, broke out, "Oh, Jesus, this is not thy gospel, or we are not Christians." The lives of professing Christians seemed to him so far below the standard of the Sermon on the Mount that he felt these could not be Christ's followers.

But Christ is more than a teacher. A teacher shows us lofty qualities and attainments and then leaves us in hopeless weakness in the dust. But Christ is Helper, Friend, Saviour, as well as Teacher. He shows us what true manliness is, then comes into our life and inspires us to strive after the things he commends, and then breathes his life into us to help us to be what he teaches us to be. Wendell Phillips once wrote in an album these words:

> I slept and dreamed that life was beauty;
> I waked to find that life was duty.
> Was then my dream a shadowy lie?
> Toil on, sad heart, courageously,
> And thou shalt find thy dream to be
> Noonday and light and life to thee.

It is not easy to be a man, a true, noble, Christlike man. It means continual struggle, for enemies of manliness meet us at every step. Every inch of the way must be won in battle. It means constant restraint and repression; for the old man in us must be subdued and kept under by the new man we have resolved to be. It means constant, painful discipline, for the powers of nature are unruly and hard to tame and control. It means unending toil and self-denial, for we must climb ever upward, and the

way is steep and rugged, and self must be trampled to death under our feet as we rise to higher life. It is hard to be a true man, for all the odds seem against us. But Christ lives, and he is Helper, Friend and Guide to every man who will accept him.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Living Christ.

"Our changeful lives are ebbing to an end;
Onward to darkness and to death we tend;
O Conqueror of the grave, be thou our guide,
Be thou our light in death's dark eventide;
Then in our mortal hour will be no gloom,
No sting in death, no terror in the tomb."

It always does us good to let the gospel of a risen, living Christ afresh into our heart. We need it in our life of care and struggle. It is an old truth, but it is one we forget, one, at least, whose power over us needs constant renewal.

The women were heart-broken when they found not the body of their Friend in the sepulcher. But suppose they had found it there, still held in the power of death! Suppose Jesus had never risen; what would have been the consequences? It would have been as if the sun, moon and stars were all blotted from the sky.

If you lay imprisoned in some great fortress

and one who loved you went forth to try to rescue you, and fell and died fighting upon the walls, you would cherish the memory of your friend's valiant effort on your behalf, but you would still remain in chains, undelivered. So would it have been with those whom Christ came to save, if he had perished in death, and had not risen. He would have been defeated in his great effort, and those for whom he gave his life would have been undelivered. Think of all the hopes of which the empty grave is the symbol—hopes for ourselves and for our dead who have fallen asleep in Jesus; hopes for this life and for the life to come,—and remember that none of these would have been ours if the women had found the body of Jesus in the grave that morning.

The angel said he was risen. Until that morning, death had been an unquestioned conqueror. Into his dark realms he had been gathering his harvests from all the generations of men. Every human life—the rich, the poor, the great, the small, the strong, the weak—had been compelled to yield to death's scepter and to pass under his yoke. Nor had any ever come again from his dark prison. True, a few persons in Old Testament days and a few at the bidding of our Lord himself, had been returned

to life; but these were not resurrections. They only came back for a little while to the old life of struggle, suffering, sorrow and pain. Until that first Easter morning, no one had ever disputed death's sway or wrested himself from the grasp of the conqueror.

"Why seek ye the living among the dead?" asked the angel. A marginal reading is, "him that liveth," that is, the one alone who really lives. He lives in himself, a life underived, independent, original. Our lives are only fragments. We do not have life in ourselves. How frail we are, even physically, fainting under light burdens, tiring on short journeys! How weak we are in our purposes, in our endeavors, and how we falter and fail in our efforts! How helpless we are in the face of opposition, driven like swirling autumn leaves before the storms! How little we accomplish! How small an impression we make on the world's life! But in contrast with all this, think of the infinite life of Christ, perfect, full, rich, changeless, eternal. He is the Life, the living One. We live only in him. Our broken fragments of life have their hope only in his eternal life.

The women had brought spices, expecting to find his body wrapped in burial garments, lying in the rock. "He is not here," said the angel.

The Living Christ

Too many Christians look yet for their Christ among the dead. They do not get beyond the cross and the grave. They see Christ as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. They think of him as accomplishing in his passion the whole of his work of human redemption. They do not think of a living Christ who intercedes for them in heaven and who walks with them on earth in loving companionship.

The cross must never be forgotten. In a certain very real sense Christ saved the world by giving himself for it.

> "From thy blessed gloom
> The hope of all the world doth rise and sing;
> By thy sweet pain immortal joy is won;
> And in the happy shadow of thy tomb
> Is hid the root of Easter's blossoming."

There could have been no Easter without a Good Friday; no rising again, without the dying on the cross. Christ must taste death for every man before he could offer deathless life to every man. The mark of the cross is on every hope of Christian faith. The light that shines in soft lustre throughout the world streams from Calvary. The sorrow of that day is that which is softening all human hearts and making all life

gentler and sweeter. The cross was the fullest, completest revealing of love that earth has ever seen. There the heart of God broke, that its streams of life might flow out to give life to the world. To leave a dying Christ out of our creed is to leave out salvation. The prints of the nails are the proof-marks on all doctrine, on all theology, on all Christian life. He who dims the lustre of the cross of Christ is putting out the light of Christian hope by which alone souls can be lighted homeward. In the holy sacrament, which means so much to Christian faith, it is the broken body and the blood of Christ that are kept before the eye of believers by the sacred memorials. We must never forget that Jesus was dead—dead for us.

But if our faith stops at the cross, it misses the blessing of the fullest revealing of Christ. We need not merely a Saviour who nineteen hundred years ago went to death to redeem us, but one who also is alive to walk by our side in loving companionship. We want a Saviour who can hear our prayers; to whose feet we can creep in penitence when we have sinned; to whom we can call for help when the battle is going against us; a Saviour who is interested in all of the affairs of our common life and who can assist us in time of need; who can be our

real Friend, loving us, keeping close beside us always,

"Closer than breathing, nearer than hands and feet."

We want a Saviour who saves us not alone by one great act wrought centuries ago, but by a life warm and throbbing with love to-day, walking ever by our side.

It is for love that our hearts hunger. The bread that will satisfy us is not the bread merely of memorial, the memory of a great devotion and sacrifice long, long since, but the bread of love, living, present, warm and throbbing. Nothing less than a living Christ will do for us. That is what the gospel brings to us. It tells us of him that liveth. He was dead—the nail-prints are in his hands—but he is now alive forevermore. He is risen. He loves us now, to-day, always. He is with us.

While we praise the love that was crucified for us, we crave love from a Saviour who lives. Memories of affection are not enough to feed a hungry soul. Memories of a friend who has gone away may be very sweet. They fill our life with fragrance. The odors of love departed stay in a home, like the perfume of sweet flowers when the flowers have been borne away. But how unsatisfying are the mere memories of our

friend when our heart hungers for love's presence and touch and tenderness! No more will the mere memories of the Love that died on the cross for us satisfy our cravings for Christ. "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God," cries every human heart. It is only as we realize the truth of a living Christ that our hearts are satisfied. We crave love—a presence, a bosom to lean upon, a hand to touch ours, a heart whose beatings we can feel, a personal friendship that will come into our life with its sympathies, its inspirations, its companionship, its shelter, its life, its comfort. All this the living Christ is to us.

> "For warm, sweet, tender, even yet
> A present help is he;
> And faith has still its Olivet,
> And love its Galilee."

The angel's word to the women, with its gentle chiding, may be spoken also to Christians whose dead have been laid in the grave. "Why seek ye him that liveth among the dead?" We think of our friends as in the grave instead of in heaven. Sacred, indeed, becomes the little spot in "God's acre" where sleeps the form of our beloved. All we know of our friends is associated with their bodily presence. The

soul looks out through eyes that we can see. The love that is so tender reveals itself to us in the touch of a real hand, in the tones of a human voice and in the glow of a living face. Everything about the dear life becomes sacred —the attitudes, the step on the floor, the chair, the room, the desk, the books, the tools, the garments, the places made familiar by association. We cannot see the inner life; we know our friend only in the form in which his spirit lives. Hence it is hard for us to think of him apart from this well-known form. When death has come and the body is only a frail and empty tent, out of which our friend has moved, it is hard for us to think of him as being elsewhere. It is natural that we should prize still the form that has grown so dear.

The women came with their spices to anoint the body of Jesus. That was beautiful. It is fitting that we plant flowers upon the graves where the bodies of our beloved sleep. We keep in sacred remembrance everything in which they live. We believe, too, in the truth of resurrection. Christ has conquered death and holds in his hand the keys of the grave. Our beloved shall rise again. It is right, therefore, that we should honor the body of the friend who was so much to us in life.

But too many think of their Christian dead only as sleeping in the grave. Their eyes look down into the darkness of the tomb with sad longing, and not upward toward the brightness of heaven, with blessed hope. The angel's voice is heard to-day, speaking to every sorrowing heart: "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" Our sainted ones have entered into life.

The truth of the living Christ should lift all our days out of dreary commonplace and fill them with heavenly brightness. If only we realized the power of the endless life, it would make all life glorious. The expectation of continuance, of a future, affects all our life. If we knew there would be no to-morrow, that when the sun goes down to-night it would not rise again, that with the night's horizon all life hereafter would be cut off, the tasks to be taken up again no more forever, would we care for the things we are doing? It is the hope of to-morrow that gives meaning to the duties and tasks of to-day. The things we are doing seem worth doing because they are beginnings which shall have their fuller meanings, their completeness, in the days to come. It is hope that gives interest and zest to life.

Richter tells of a beautiful dream. He was

lost in the vast spaces, and he saw sailing toward him, amid galaxies of stars, a dark globe in a sea of light. He saw on it a little child. At last he recognized our earth in the dark globe, and in the form of the child, Jesus, who looked upon him with a light so bright, gentle and loving, that he awoke for joy. No matter how dark life may seem to us, while the living Christ appears, all is well. His presence illumines any gloom. The shining of his face gives peace in any storm.

CHAPTER XXII.

Friendships in Heaven.

"It seemeth such a little way to me
Across to that strange country, the beyond;
And yet not strange—for it has grown to be
The home of those of whom I am so fond;
They make it seem familiar and most dear,
As journeying friends bring distant countries near.

And so to me there is no sting to death,
And so the grave has lost its victory;
It is but crossing, with abated breath
And white, set face, a little strip of sea,
To find the loved ones waiting on the shore,
More beautiful, more precious than before."

There is a story of a ship whose crew were rendered unfit for their duties by coming in sight of their home-land. For many years they had been cruising in foreign waters. At last they came near their native hills. From the lookout came the shout "Home!" Instantly all the men were wild with excitement. Some climbed the masts, some stood on deck and strained their eyes to catch a glimpse of dear scenes. Every heart beat with mingled hope

and joy. Old memories came thronging back. Wives and children and parents and homes were there. In their delight the men left their posts and the ship was at the mercy of the waves. Other sailors had to be gotten from the shore to bring the vessel to her landing.

Somewhat like this would it be with us in this world, if we could see heaven and its inhabitants, our loved ones among them, and all the glories of that blessed home. We would be unfit for our duties here. In our excitement of joy we should become unfit for our earthly tasks. It is better that we should not know all about heaven. It is mercy that draws the veil before our eyes.

Yet in our life here the question continually arises: "Will it all end when death parts us?" My father and mother lived together more than forty years, until they seemed to have only one soul, so closely had their lives blended. They thought alike, talked alike, almost looked alike. My father died first, and after that my mother's loneliness was pathetic to behold. She did not complain; she was sweetly submissive to God's will. But her thoughts were not on earth. She pined for the companionship she had lost. "I want to go too," she would sometimes say. In a little time she slipped away. Did they

meet again, those two gentle lovers, who had lived together so long that their two souls had blended into one?

Some Sadducees came to Jesus with a question. A woman had been married seven times: which of the seven men would have her as his wife after the resurrection? The Master answered clearly: "The children of this world marry and are given in marriage: but they that are accounted worthy to attain to that world and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage."

What is the teaching? Very clearly this—that marriage is a relation only for this earthly life, and that it will not be re-established in the heavenly state. Nor will the marriage ties of earth be resumed as such in heaven. The husband and wife will not meet again as husband and wife in the new society of heaven.

Does this teaching startle some one? Does it mean that two who have lived together on earth as husband and wife, in tender and holy relations, praying side by side, and walking together in the way of God's commandments, shall not meet together in heaven and resume their close fellowship? No; Christ said not one word which can be construed to mean this. Husband and wife will not resume the marriage

relation there, but if their hearts are knit together here in pure and holy love, they will meet there in holy love. Certainly those who have had so much in common, who have suffered together, toiled together, sacrificed together, sorrowed, hand in hand, if their lives are truly knit the one to the other, will take up again the old threads of love and go on forever weaving them into a web of imperishable beauty.

Note a few things about the heavenly life. One is, that all the redeemed shall dwell together as one family. The true home-life is a faint type of heaven's fellowship. Yet the purest earthly home is imperfect. Home has been called "heaven's fallen sister." The fellowships of heaven will be immeasurably sweeter than those of earth. The family life will be perfect. While your associations with your earthly kindred will be close and tender in proportion to the closeness and depth of your affection here, the family will embrace a far wider circle. You will meet the saints of all ages—patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs. All who have ever lived a godly life will be your brothers and sisters. What a privilege it will be to commune with those whose lives so brightened the world while they were in it, and

whose influence has lived since they have gone, a perpetual benediction in this world! What a wonderful company it will be, that complete company of the redeemed, gathered from all lands and from all ages!

Think of all those who have blessed the world and helped in its regeneration—the poets who have sung the world's pure songs, the artists whose pictures have been inspirations to so many souls, the missionaries who have carried Christ's name into the dark places, the mothers who have lived to train children for God, the great men who have led in the world's reformations, the sweet lives which have been like gentle, fragrant flowers in this earth's wildernesses, the holy ones who have resisted temptations, keeping themselves unspotted from the world, those who have suffered wrong in silence, those who have lived deeply, learning life's lessons well and then teaching those lessons in books that throb with human sympathy, in songs that teach others how to live and how to love. How our feelings overmaster us as we try to think of that great family of God in which we shall find ourselves as members,—children of God, children of the resurrection! All the precious things of human life, gathered out of all the ages, shall be there. Not a gleam

of true beauty that has ever flashed its beam in this world's darkness has been lost.

Think of living, even here on earth, in a company, a community, composed of the one thousand best, noblest, most holy and most refined people to be gathered from all lands—every life a song, every face bearing the beauty of Christ, every character rich with the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, goodness; every spirit full of the best human life sweetened by heavenly grace. It would be supreme happiness to be one of such company, comprising the best people of this earth. Heaven will be far better than this, for it will have in it the best of all ages—not as they were here, with earthly limitations, only fragments of beauty appearing in them, marred, too, by sinful things and by human frailties—but made perfect in love, in holiness, in all Christian life. The "whole family" will comprise the redeemed of all ages and countries, the spirits of all just men made perfect. While we shall lose nothing out of the life of friendship we have lived here—keeping every friend—we shall gain immeasurably by having the good of all ages for our brothers and sisters.

But some one says, "I do not care for this

great family, this circle that takes in all the world. I want my own. I never cared to have many friends. I want my own mother and father, my sister, my child, my husband, my wife, my little circle—I want these to be my friends in heaven." Well, you will have these, if they and you are truly united in Christ in this world. The Bible speaks of reunions in the other life. When David's child died, the father spoke of it as only carried over into another home, where it would wait for him. "I cannot bring him back to me," he said, "but I shall go to him." The separation would be only for a time. There would be a reunion. The father would have his child again. In the multitude of friendships, new and old, in heaven, this one—of the king and his little child—would be distinct and blessed.

The same teaching underlies all the revealings of the Bible concerning the heavenly life. For example, love is the sum of all life. From Genesis to Revelation men are taught to love. God's own character is painted in one word—"God is love." Then we are taught to be like God, to seek the restoring of the image of God in our souls. All duty is summed up in the commandments, in the one word: "Thou shalt love." Jesus came to reveal God and he

bade his followers to love. By this mark, he said, all men should know that they were his disciples, because they were loving. We say John reached the highest place among the disciples and was dearest to Christ, and nearest, and John was the disciple of love. Love blossomed out in his life in its finest beauty. Thus all Christian culture is toward love. Home is Christ's first school, and home life is simply learning to love. Friendship is another school. Friendship is discipline. With all its frictions, its anxieties, its thought, its toil, its self-denial, its training in patience, forbearance and meekness, it is simply a long lesson in loving. All through the New Testament we are taught to love. The fruits of the Spirit named by St. Paul are merely branches of love, parts of the lesson of loving. Love is the fulfilling of the law. If we have learned to love truly, purely, loving not in the word only but in deed, we have met all the requirements of God's commandments. The whole work of the Bible and of the divine Spirit in us is to build up love in our character.

Now, when, in obedience to this holy teaching, we spend our thirty, fifty, seventy years in learning to love, will God destroy all this affection, undo all this beautiful work, in death? Is

heaven so different from earth that what grace teaches us here is the one essential of a beautiful life shall have no place in the new life? Is love only a sentiment of earth, unworthy of heaven? No, no; love is immortal. St. Paul says, "Love never faileth." The love that is wrought into our character is imperishable. When we have formed a true friendship with another, heart and heart knitting together, the bond is indissoluble. The external and earthly form of marriage does not last over into the heavenly life, but the real marriage does last—the love which binds the two lives together in one, death cannot touch. Kinship of blood will not have any place in heaven, but the ties that really bind kindred together, brothers and sisters, parents and children, will continue, tender and strong, in the new life.

The friendships there will not be the continuation of the mere formal attachments of earth, too many of which are empty of love. People will not be close friends in heaven because they happened to be husband and wife, brother and sister, here, but because here they have truly loved each other. If a man and a woman live in the same house and eat at the same table for forty years, and yet do not really love each other, their lives never truly blending,

there is no reason for believing that they will be special friends in heaven. They never were such here. Marriage ties as such will be dissolved at the grave's edge.

It is very clear, then, that nothing but true union of hearts will survive death. Passion dies at the grave. All sin goes down into the dust and perishes. Selfishness is mortal and undivine. But love that is pure, disinterested, unselfish, free from passion and earthliness; the love that springs out of the heart's depths and twines in tenderness about another life, that shall last forever. Jonathan's and David's friendship is going on yet in heaven. So is Ruth's and Naomi's. So is Paul's and Timothy's.

If, therefore, we would have our earthly friendships last over, we must be truly one in our life here. Nothing that is not real can enter heaven. All that would separate must be put away. The two lives must blend in tender, thoughtful, self-forgetful love. The same is true of all home-ties and of all friendships. The love must be real. Hearts must be knit together.

It is worth while, therefore, to cultivate our friendships and to seek to make them abiding and true. Perhaps we are too careless in this.

We do not prize highly enough the love and trust of others. We make too little of hurting other hearts. Ofttimes there is a sundering of friends here which is sadder than death's sundering. We listen to the talebearer's venomous word and henceforth we grow away from our friend. There are friends lost who are living yet, whom we see every day, mayhap, but who are lost to us. They and we have drifted apart. The old tenderness is a buried thing. There are husbands and wives, walking together, dwelling under the same roof, maintaining formal relations of intimacy, and yet a thousand miles apart.

This ought not so to be. We ought never to drift apart when once our hearts are drawn together. Friendship needs cultivation. It requires great patience, self-denial, thoughtfulness, sympathy, affection, to be a friend. But it is worth while. We should cherish our friends. We should make our friendships like Christ's, and he loves unto the uttermost. We should build for eternity. We should weave webs of friendship here which shall remain beautiful and radiant in the other life.

Does not this hope make it worth while to guard our friendships here? Shall we not learn to be better, truer friends, more patient, more

constant, more thoughtful, more faithful? Shall we not seek to have Christ as the bond of union in every friendship? No friendship is sure and complete, and no friendship can go on in heaven, without this golden thread as one of its cords.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Duty of Forgetting.

They are poor
Who have lost nothing; they are poorer far
Who, losing, have forgotten; they most poor
Of all who lose and wish they might forget.
For life is one, and in its warp and woof
There runs a thread of gold that glitters fair
And sometimes in the pattern shows most sweet
Where there are sombre colors. It is true
That we have wept. But, oh! this thread of gold,
We would not have it tarnish; let us turn
Oft and look back upon the wondrous web,
And when it shineth sometimes, we shall know
That memory is possession.

Jean Ingelow.

It is a great thing to learn to live in the future. St. Paul put the lesson in very plain words when he said: "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark." To get the full force of these words, it must be remembered that they were written when St. Paul was an old man. It is no unusual thing for the young to look forward.

The world is all before them. They have only stepped on the edge of life, and there lies before them an unopened, untraversed future, full of bright, beautiful visions and brilliant hopes. It draws them forward by its thousand golden possibilities of attainment, achievement, success. It is full of sweet-voiced birds of prophecy. Youth has no past, nothing to leave behind; all its treasures are on before. It is natural, therefore, for the young to look forward and press onward.

But ordinarily it is not so with the old. As the years advance, they look back more and more. The future has less and less to draw them on. The past is their treasure-house. It holds the best things of their life,—their best work, their sweetest joys, their tenderest friendships. They have little more to win. In the short path before them there are but few flowers which they can hope to pluck. There is but little room for new achievement. They can make no new friendships. It is natural for the old to look backward, to live in memory, not in hope.

But here we see an old man who lives wholly in the future. He was a prisoner. He was broken by much suffering and hardship. It certainly was not a bright earthly outlook that

he had from his dungeon grating. Would you not say, looking at him, that the best, the brightest, the grandest part of his career was behind him? What could there be in the future for that weary, broken old man? What new lands could he hope to explore? What new achievements could he expect yet to make?

Yet here he stands, amid his life's evening shadows, and declares that his sublimest work lies yet before him, that he has not yet attained his life's goal, that his best has not yet been reached. "I care nothing for anything in my past," he says; "it does not satisfy me. It is not worth counting. Old and broken though I be, hemmed in, too, by these oppressive limitations, these walls, these chains, yet I am not at the end of my life; an unquenchable hope lives in my heart; and the star of my life shines far onward."

So we see him there, in the thickening shadows of life's evening-time, in the mists of gathering twilight, weary, worn, wearing chains, but still full of hope, still straining every energy, still reaching forward, still forgetting the past, still drawn irresistibly on toward some great aim, some glorious goal, that lies beyond, unseen by mortal eyes. At length night falls upon the vanishing form; it passes out of our

sight; we see the old man going at last to a martyr's death. But his eyes are yet fixed on something bright and glorious beyond. In the last words we catch from his lips, he speaks of a crown laid up for him. The last glimpse of him we have, with white locks tossed by the wind, with eyes fixed steadily and intently upon the Beyond, he is still pressing on.

The secret was this—he had in his eyes a distinct and definite future—a future not bounded by death's horizon, but running on into eternity. Immortality was real to him. No runner in a race ever saw goal or garland more vividly than this glorious, eagle-eyed man saw the end of his course, the goal of his life. Nor was it any earthly vision that drew him on; had it been, hope would have been dead in his heart in the broken years of his old age. He saw life sweeping on through death and beyond it, and so he looked forward to the future when he would reach his loftiest attainments. Nothing good, beautiful, true or real would end for him at the grave.

What were the things which were before that old apostle there in his prison? Nothing very bright, the man of the world would say,—a few days of chains and dungeon-life, then the ax, and then a grave. Cicero said: "An old

man has nothing indeed to hope for; yet he is in so much the happier state than a young man, since he has already attained what the other only hopes for." To this heathen writer there was nothing before old age. But before the Christian old man there are far more blessed things than the best he has left behind him.

What are some of the things that are before us? The sinless purity into which our souls shall rise when they burst away from this which we call life; the endless growth and development of all our powers in the summer of God's love; the wondrous career of sublime occupation which shall be ours when we reach our full redemption; the perfect beauty of the divine likeness which shall glow on our dull faces in the home of peace; the eternal blessedness of that rest which is "deep as summer midnight, yet full of life and force as summer sunshine"—the rest of God, into which we shall enter. The best of life is yet to be.

It is well worth our while to study the way in which St. Paul sought to reach the better things which he saw before him. It was by forgetting the things that were behind him. He was never satisfied with anything here as his final attainment. He found on earth no resting-place; his home ever lay onward and upward.

He lingered in no place, but ever sought a country. He cared little what to-day's circumstances were—how hard, how bare, how painful, for to-morrow he would be gone. The blessed hope which filled his soul made him utterly indifferent to the discomforts of the present moment. He forgot the things which were behind him and reached forth to the things which were before.

Of course, there is a proper use to be made of our past. We should remember the lessons we have learned from past experience, so as to profit by our mistakes, and avoid repeating them. The true science of living is not to make no mistakes,—which is impossible,—but not to repeat the same mistakes a second time. We should remember past mercies and blessings. If we do, memory will shine down upon us like a clear sky, full of stars. Such remembering of the past will keep the gratitude ever fresh in our hearts and the incense of praise ever burning on the altar. Such a house of memory becomes a refuge to which we may flee in trouble. When sorrows gather thickly; when trials come on like the waves of the sea; when the sun goes down and every star is quenched, and there seems nothing left to us in all the present, then the memory of a

past full of goodness, a past in which God never once failed us, becomes a holy refuge for us, a refuge gemmed and lighted by the lamps of other and brighter days. Thus there are uses of the past which bring blessing. Memory has its holy office.

But there is a sense in which we should altogether forget our past. We should forget our past attainments. If any man who ever lived might have been satisfied with his life, St. Paul might have been with his. No other man ever got nearer to Christ than he did. No other ever more completely put the world under his feet. No other ever realized more of Christlikeness in character. No other ever did a greater work or left a more blessed, fragrant influence. Yet there was no elation, no feeling even of satisfaction with himself. His attainments all bore to his own eye marks of incompleteness. He never looked back to find comfort in good things he had done, but cherished always a sublime discontent with himself, and ever looked to what he was going to attain. The attained was ever dwarfed and impoverished to his eye by the splendors of the unattained. It was this divine unrest that made St. Paul a growing Christian to the day of his death. Nothing is so fatal to all Christian progress as

the feeling of satisfaction with one's attainments. When a man sits down and says, "I am contented now; I have reached my goal. I am as good as I expect to be in this world. I never aspire to anything better than this work I have just finished," from that moment he ceases to grow. He will strive no more and make no new achievement.

This is true in all life. The want of appetite is a mark of physical disease, and hunger is a token of health. The cessation of the desire to learn is a sign that intellectual growth has ended. So in spiritual life, hunger is a mark of health. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness. Blessed are the unsatisfied. Blessed are they who long for more and more. All through the Bible we find in true believers a thirst for God, a deep, passionate yearning for closer, fuller, richer, more satisfying communion with God himself. The best thing in us never is what we are, what we have already reached, but our longing for that which is yet higher and better. The trouble with too many of us is that we are too well satisfied with ourselves. We have attained a little measure of peace, of holiness, of faith, of joy, of knowledge of Christ, and we are not hungering for the larger possible attainments.

Nothing could be sadder than this state,—no more longing, no more growth, no more hunger, no more feeding upon Christ, no more aspiration, no more reaching upward. With all the infinite possibilities of spiritual life before us we should not settle down on a patch of dusty ground at the mountain's foot in any restful content. Where is the immortal in us if we can be satisfied with the little we have learned of Christ, the little we have attained of likeness to him and communion with him? We should pray for spiritual discontent.

We should also forget past sorrows. Too many people live perpetually in the shadows of their past griefs and losses. They feel that love for the friends who are gone requires them to continue in sadness, and therefore they dwell year after year amid the memories of their griefs. Nothing could be more unwholesome. What would be thought of the man who should build a house for himself, with black stones, paint all the walls and apartments black, hang black curtains over the dark windows, put black carpet on every floor, festoon the chambers with crape, put only sad pictures on the walls, and gloomy books on the shelves, and who should have no flowers blooming about his doors or windows but flowers for funeral wreaths, no

trees but weeping-willows and cypresses? Yet there are people who really live in just this way. They make a home like this for their soul. They forget all the pleasant things, the joys, the mercies, the blessings, and remember only the sad, painful things. They keep the heart-wounds of years unhealed, continually tearing them open again. They cherish and nourish all their griefs.

That is not the Christian way to deal with sorrow. If we believe that our dead are in immortal blessedness with God, why do we so linger at the dark grave? They are not there, these departed ones; then why not turn our gaze toward heaven where they wait? We should remember the things which are before and forget the things which are behind. Do you grieve? God will never blame you for your grief, but he would have you pour it into the channels of beautiful, holy living. Let it make your heart more sympathetic, your voice gentler, your hand softer, and let it send you out to be a comforter of others, and never to cast the shadows of your grief on life's sunny paths.

An officer leading a charge in battle, came to the dead body of his own boy, who had fallen in an advance line. His impulse was to stop,

to halt his men, to neglect his duty in the battle, and to weep over his beloved son. But it was the very crisis of the engagement. He was leading his men at one of the most important points in the field. He dare not pause for tears. He flung himself from his horse, knelt an instant beside the body of his boy, pressed a hot kiss upon the white lips, then rose quickly and led his men in the assault.

We must have our sorrows, and sometimes they are very sore. Our heart's first impulse, in such experience, is to give up our work, to lose our place in the moving column of life's march, and to linger uncomforted by our griefs. But we dare not do this. Duty always presses, bidding us forward. Others suffer if we linger. The living children need the mother's love and care, and she must not stay a minute in neglect of them to weep beside her dead. The death of a father calls the mother away from tears, and ordains her to double duty and responsibility. Bereavement is always a call to new and sacred service.

Then God has so ordered, too, that in pressing on in duty we shall find the sweetest, richest comfort for ourselves. Sitting down to brood over our sorrows, the darkness deepens about us, and our little strength changes to

weakness. But if we turn away from the gloom, and take up the tasks and duties to which God calls us, the light will come again and we shall grow strong.

"When all our hopes are gone,
For others' sake
'Tis well our hands must still keep toiling on.
For strength to bear is found in duty done,
And he is blest, indeed, who learns to make
The joy of others cure his own heart-ache."

We should forget also past mistakes and sins. Few problems in life are more important than the question—how to deal with our sins. It is a wonderful truth that in grace we can leave our sins behind us and go on to new life. Were there no cross with its atoning sacrifice, we could not do this. Our sins would cling to us forever and blot our skies with blackness that never could be washed white. But the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sins. God himself forgets the sins he forgives, remembers them no more, forever leaves them behind, and he wants us to forget our forgiven sins, not to waste one hour in grief over them, but to pour the energy of our penitence into new life. By the power of the divine grace our sins and our falls may even be made to yield bless-

ing. Many of the best things in the old man's life are the harvest of his penitences and repentings. Through the grace of Christ we may so deal with our sins as to extract blessing from their shame, sweetness from their bitterness, beauty from their loathsomeness. Our very falls may become new births to our souls, and we may leave them behind us, using them as stepping-stones to new and holier life.

> "Noble souls, through dust and heat,
> Rise from disaster and defeat
> The stronger;
> And conscious still of the divine
> Within them, lie on earth supine
> No longer."

Thus true life looks ever forward. We may never rest. Our goal is before us. We must live loose to this world, never anchoring our barques for a long stay. Our best attainments must be but steps to higher attainments. To-day's achievements must but inspire us for nobler achievements to-morrow. "Forward and not back" is the true motto for a Christian life. Even sorrows must not detain us, and we must take little time for farewells and for tears, so urgent is the life of duty and obedience which calls us on, and so glorious are the bless-

ings that wait before us. Even our sins must not cause us to falter, but we must hasten away from them, leaving the vales of defeat, to climb to the holy heights of victory. The best is ever onward and forward. We are not going toward death, but toward life. What we call dying is but trampling to fragments the hindering walls of mortality and pressing through into the full, unrestrained, boundless blessedness of life.

Such a life as this is possible only in Christ. If we are not Christians, we cannot forget the things that are behind—for we have nothing before us that is beautiful and worthy. We cannot press forward to the things that are before,—what is there before us if we have not Christ, if our sins are not forgiven, if we have no home and treasure in heaven? How can we leave sorrow behind if no comforter comes with the blessed revealing of immortality? The realities of life are the unseen things which are ours in Christ. Heaven is always before us and heaven holds life's best joys, attainments and treasures.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Night and Jesus Absent.

Be near me when all else from me is drifting—
  Earth, sky, home's picture, days of shade and shine,
And kindly faces to my own uplifting
  The love that answers mine.

Whittier.

Sometimes a whole picture lies in a sentence or part of a sentence. Thus St. John describes a scene on the Sea of Galilee: "It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them." The disciples had been sent out on the sea alone. Evening was drawing on. Moreover, a storm was gathering, adding to their anxieties and fears. Their distress was very great.

The experience is repeated continually in the life of Christ's friends. They are out upon the sea. Darkness is coming on. Storms are rising. Yet they seem to be left alone. Jesus has not come to them. Why does he leave us thus to enter the night without him? If we read this gospel incident through to the close and use it as a parable, it will have rich instruction for us.

It was not the disciples' own doing, this

being out on the sea that night; the Master had sent them out. This should have been a comfort to them, when the darkness came on and the waves began to roll. No disobedience of their own had brought them into their present circumstances of danger. They were in the way of obedience.

The path of duty does not always lie in the sunshine; sometimes it passes into the darkness. The voyage of life is not always over calm seas, with gentle, favoring breezes; sometimes the winds are contrary, and we must move in the teeth of the tempest. Darkness and tempest are not always intimations that we are in the wrong way. We may be in the path of duty, of obedience, and yet find gloom and contrary winds. In these cases the consciousness that we are doing the Master's will ought to be to us a strength and a comfort. We need never be afraid of the night or of the storm into which Christ sends us. If we go into danger by our own willfulness or reckless disobedience, it is different, for then we go without the presence and help of Christ. But when Christ has bidden us take the course in which we meet night and storm, we may keep on our way, sure of emerging beyond the gloom and the wild waves, into morning and calm.

Another comfort in the darkness of that night was that, though Jesus had not yet come to his disciples in their danger, he was not forgetful of them. One of the Gospels tells us that from his place in the mountain he saw the disciples distressed in rowing. He was caring for them as really as if he had been with them. We may be sure that this picture is realized in the life of every Christian who seems to be left alone in any gathering night. Jesus is still on his mountain of intercession. Though we may not see him, he sees us. He looks upon us in love. He is aware of all our struggles and all our fears. The confidence that we are ever under the eye of the watching, loving Christ, ought to give us strong comfort.

In one of the old English prisons there was an underground dungeon which was used as a place of punishment for those who fell under disfavor. Among the prisoners, at one time, there was a man of refinement with exceedingly nervous temperament, to whom the horror of this dungeon was a haunting terror. Then one day he offended in some way and was sentenced to four and twenty hours in this cell. He was led to the place, the door was opened and he passed down the stairs into the dark depths. The shutting of the door sent its echoes through the

gloomy dungeon. Then all was still—a stillness that was terrible in its oppressiveness. Nervous and full of fear, the poor man sank to the floor. His brain throbbed as with fever, and mocking voices seemed to sound on all sides. He felt that the terror would drive him mad.

Suddenly he heard footsteps overhead, and then a voice gently calling his name. Never was any music so sweet. "God bless you!" he gasped. "Are you there?" "Yes," answered the prison chaplain, "and I am not going to leave this place until you come out." "God bless you!" cried the prisoner. "Why, I do not mind it at all, now, with you there." The terror was all gone. The darkness was powerless to harm him while his friend was so near, close above him, though unseen.

So in all the hours of our darkness, in the blackest night, in the deepest sorrow, in the sorest perplexity, when we think we are alone, while we long for Christ's presence and wonder why he comes not, he is really near us, watching us, caring for us, though unseen by us. There is no darkness where a friend of Christ gropes, that is not swept by the eye of divine love. There is no child of God in the midst of any wild storm, who is not watched over and sheltered by the divine care.

There is another comfort. There was a time of waiting, but at last Jesus came—came walking on the tossing waves, as if they had been a smooth marble floor. It was well-nigh morning when he came—the fourth watch of the night. He seems to have waited till the last moment. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." But he came in good time to deliver his friends. When he came he soon brought peace. At his word the terror of the disciples vanished. The wind also ceased and the sea became calm.

Our human hearts crave revealings of Christ. We are not fully satisfied with knowing that he is looking down upon us from above the stars; we want to hear his voice. It is a sore trial to get no answer to our continued calling. The silence of Christ to us when we pray is very oppressive. No wonder the old psalm-writer pleads: "Be not thou silent to me: lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit." We crave answer when we pray. We cry:

"Speak, speak, oh, my Saviour, to me!
Thy silence affrights me,
Thy distance benights me
Through which I hear not nor see;
No voice and no smile that invites me—
In vain I am looking for thee.

Night and Jesus Absent

Oh, speak to me through this murk shade,
My vision forbidden,
My conscience sore chidden,
My soul, not my senses, afraid;
From the light of thy countenance hidden,
Where my feet have heedlessly strayed.

For if thou keep silent to me
Rather my choice is
To hearken no voices,
And song's sweet enchantment to flee;
That cloys me which elsewhere rejoices,
Afar from my hearing of thee.

Speak, Lord, then, if but to reveal
The wilful demerit
Searing my spirit—
And even thy chiding shall steal
Like balm to my heart as I hear it,
And so wound it only to heal.

For when thou hast spoken to me,
Consciously nearer—
I shall see clearer
Thy face but for thinking I see;
And thought of thee then growing dearer—
Gloom with the silence shall flee."

When, at length, after long waiting, the voice of Christ falls upon our ears in our darkness and sorrow, the gloom does indeed flee. Even the voice of a human loved one speaking in the dark-

ness calms the tempest in our breast and fills the darkness as with gentle light. We feel afraid no longer; the voice reveals a presence and we are comforted. But the revealing of Christ in our time of dread means infinitely more of peace and comfort. When he comes, fear flees and peace fills the lonely, trembling heart. And he will surely come. His delays are not desertions. At the right moment, when he has taught us all the lessons we need to learn by his absence and his silence to us, he will return, driving away the darkness and quieting the storms by his presence and his words of love.

This picture—entering the night and the storm, with Jesus absent—has another suggestion for us. These disciples who put out to sea, as the darkness came on, with the Master not yet come to them, represent all who enter life without Christ. Life seems bright and sunny to youth with its inexperience. It has no nights and no storms. But we do not pass far into the years that bring their duty, responsibility, and care, until we come to experiences of struggle and toil. Life soon grows serious. In the Revelation where the blessings of the kingdom of heaven are described, we learn that all noble attainments in spiritual character and all life's rewards and prizes lie beyond lines of battle.

It is only to "him who overcometh" that these blessings are promised. The youth does not advance far till he learns that life is not play, but most earnest business. Nothing can be accomplished without effort. Toil is the price of success. To loiter is to lose all. To falter is to fail. At every point antagonisms meet him and he must fight for his very life. He soon learns, too, that if he has not the Lord Jesus Christ for his friend and helper, he can never make his way to the worthy things which lie on the hill-tops beyond the vales of struggle.

No doubt many people do live all their life without Christ. They do not confess their need of him. They shut him out of their experiences. They struggle alone. They meet their responsibilities unaided by divine grace. No doubt, too, they may seem to succeed. They prosper in the world. But they live only an earthly life. They ignore their own higher nature. They ignore God and heaven and immortality. They gain the world and lose themselves. No life is worthy of an immortal being which does not gain the higher things of the soul. A picture with only earth, and no sky, is tame and lacks truest beauty. A life without sky and stars and heaven is unworthy the name of life. Besides, its seeming success

is really terrible disaster—the loss of eternity. No one can meet life without Christ.

There is the experience of temptation. We do not live many years before we come to it. No one can escape it. Even the sinless Jesus had to meet it. Temptation is ofttimes a black night for the soul that enters into it. The scene of the disciples struggling in the darkness with contrary winds, distressed in rowing, scarcely able to guide their boat through the tempest, is not too stern a picture of the experience of many a soul in the struggles of temptation without Christ. We are such fools in our self-confidence! "Others have fallen—yes, but we shall not fall. Others have perished in the darkness—yes, but we shall not perish. Others have had to cry out for help when they had fallen, lying in their defeat until some one came to lift them up—yes, but we shall not fall; we shall not be defeated." So we talk, as we foolishly pass into the darkness and the storm without Christ.

But we should not dare to pass into the dark night and out upon the wild sea of temptation without Christ. Human help is something. We are to go to our brothers who have fallen, to lift them up, and our hands are to be as Christ's hands for this blessed ministry. But

if human hands were the only ones, none could ever be kept from falling; nor could any ever be lifted up and helped on to the end. We must have Christ in temptation, or we shall perish.

There is also the experience of sorrow which every life must meet. In sunny youth sorrow seems very far off. The skies are blue. Flowers spring up along the path. Soft breezes fan the cheeks. Joy is everywhere. Hope shines in all the future. But there comes a time when it grows dark. Sorrow covers the heavens with blackness. If Christ be not present with his love and light and comfort, as the soul passes into sorrow's night, it will be very dark indeed.

Then there is the darkness of death. We may miss many things in this world. Our path may lie all the way in sunshine. There are some lives which seem to be spared great conflicts and struggles, which are called to pass through no bitter griefs. But not one of us can hope to miss dying. We must come down to the edge of the valley of death. We must enter into the darkness. What will any of us do then without Christ? The disciples trembled and were afraid when night came on, and when they had to put out upon the sea in the

darkness, without Jesus. But that sea was only a little lake, a few miles over; and they were familiar with every part of it, for they had spent their life about it and upon it. The darkness, too, would be but for a few hours, with morning following. Far more momentous an experience is it to go out upon the sea of death. We have never passed this way heretofore, and all is strange and unfamiliar. Where the shores stretch we cannot tell. What is in its deep, black night, no imagination can paint. But for the Christian, death has no terrors. Christ has made the way bright with peace. He walks with his own and they sing:

"Yea, e'en when I walk in the valley of the shadow of death,
No ill do I fear, for thou art beside me,—
Thy sceptre and staff are my comfort."

But it is a fearful thing to die without Christ. Saddest of all pictures is that of those whom these words describe as entering the night of death: "It was now dark, and Jesus had not come to them."

This lifting of the veil at a few points shows how real is the soul's need of Christ, and how dreary, sad and perilous it is to pass into these experiences without Christ. If any one thinks

that life has been depicted here in too sombre and serious colors, it may be said that without Christ life is a most grave and serious matter. How can a man live—entering life's battles, accepting its responsibilities, assuming its duties, passing into its sorrows, or think of taking its last walk into the shadows, without Christ?

A thoughtful man gave three reasons why he had not become an infidel after reading all the books written against Christianity. "First, I am a man. I am going somewhere. To-night I am a day nearer the grave than I was last night. I have read all that the skeptics can tell me. They shed not one solitary ray of hope or light upon the darkness. They shall not take away the guide and leave me stone-blind. Second, I had a mother. I saw her go down into the dark valley where I am going, and she leaned on an unseen arm as calmly as a child goes to sleep on its mother's breast. I know that was a reality, not a dream. Third, I have three motherless daughters. They have no protection but myself. I would rather see them dead than leave them in this sinful world, if you blot out from it all the teachings of the gospel."

CHAPTER XXV.

Numbering Our Days.

"They are slipping away—these sweet, swift years,
Like a leaf on the current cast,
With never a break in the rapid flow;
We watch them as one by one they go
Into the beautiful past.

One after another we see them pass
Down the dim-lighted stair;
We hear the sound of their steady tread
In the steps of the centuries long since dead,
As beautiful and as fair."

What is it to number our days? One way is to keep careful record of them. That is a mathematical numbering. We say we are so many years old. We note our birthdays. But that is not the numbering which is meant in the old time Bible prayer: "Teach us to number our days." Mere adding of days is not living. There are those whose years leave no blessing in the world, and who gather no growth of good or wisdom into their own hearts as they pass through life. There are people who live

to be seventy years, eighty years, old, who might as well never have been born.

> "It is not growing like a tree,
> In bulk, doth make a man better be;
> Or standing like an oak, three hundred year,
> To fall a log at last—dry, bald and sere."

Another way of numbering our days is illustrated by the story of a prisoner. When he first entered his cell, he made marks on the wall of all the days of the sentence he was to serve. Then at the close of each day he would rub off one mark. He had one day more of prison life put in, and there was one day less for him to remain. This process he continued till he had completed the time of his incarceration. Each one of us every evening has one day more expunged from his appointed time on earth. One more day is gone, with its opportunities, its privileges, its duties, its responsibilities—gone beyond recall. We can never get it back to change anything; to undo any wrong done in it; to do any omitted duties that belonged to it; to take any gift or blessing that was offered and rejected during the bright hours; to seize any opportunity that came and passed.

There is something startling in this thought of the irrevocableness of time past. At the

close of a day one line more is blotted from the column and gone forever from us. If we have lived the day well, it is all right. Days that go from us filled with true, sweet, noble living, the little page written all over with pure, white thoughts and records of gentle deeds, need never be mourned over. But it is a sad thing to have to rub out the lines of days of idleness, of uncleanness, of selfishness, of lost opportunities, of unaccepted privileges and blessings. Such numbering of days is not the numbering Moses had in mind. Such days are lost days.

"Who's seen my day?
'Tis gone away,
Nor left a trace
In any place.
If I could only find
Its foot-fall in some mind,
Some spirit-waters stirred
By wand of deed or word,
I should not stand at shadowy eve
And for my day so grieve and grieve."

The true way of numbering our days is suggested in the prayer in the old psalm when we read it in full: "So teach us to number our days that we may get us an heart of wisdom." We are so to live our days as they pass that we shall get new wisdom from them. Life's lessons

cannot all be learned from books. The teachings may be set down in books, but it is only in actual living that we can learn them. For example, patience. A book or a teacher may tell us very clearly what patience is, what it does, how it bears itself amid life's frictions; but learning all this will not make us patient. We must get our patience in the school of life.

We talk of learning from the experience of other people. There are things we can get in this way. Probably we ought to learn more than most of us do from those who have gone over the way before us. But the truth is we have to go over the path ourselves to get its lessons. We have to learn by doing, by failing, by stumbling, by suffering, by making our own mistakes, by enduring the results and consequences of our own self-conceit and folly.

Out of the experience of our days we ought to get a heart of wisdom. Some people never do. Said the wise man, "Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar, with a pestle among bruised corn, yet will not his foolishness depart from him." There are plenty of such fools all the time. They make the same mistake over and over, suffering always from it in the same way, but never learning wisdom from the experience. This is most unprofitable living.

We ought to get a heart of wisdom from the passing days.

We come to a birthday or a new year. We cannot change anything that has been done in our year. It is idle even to waste a moment in weeping over the mistakes we have made, the follies we have committed. Tears will blot out nothing that life has written on its folded pages. Grieving will not correct mistakes. But we ought to learn wisdom from the year's experiences. "To err is human," but we ought not to repeat our errings. We ought not to need to be brayed twice in the same mortar. We ought not to burn our fingers twice in the same fire. We ought not to be deceived twice by the same temptation.

We ought to begin our new year with a wiser heart. Life should be cumulative. Each year should be lived on a higher plane than the last one, with a truer view of life's object, with increased energy. The hurts made this year by the things that have happened to us should become new adornments and enrichments in our character. If we are living right, obediently, and near the heart of Christ, all things will work together for good to us. It is the part of wisdom to take out of all things the good which the love of God would give to us.

No matter, then, what the experience of any closing year has been to us, it is our privilege and the part of wisdom in us to carry from it some good. It is sad indeed if we have lived through three hundred and sixty-five days, with their burdens, duties, cares, sorrows, gains, losses, joys, pains, mistakes, successes, failures, loves, and are no wiser, no better, stronger, more Christlike, than we were when we crossed the threshold of the year. He who has lived well carries the marks of the year's experiences in his character in larger, truer, nobler, stronger manhood.

Some people talk sadly of the closing of a year. They think of it as a friend with whom they have walked in close companionship, from whom they must now separate themselves. We talk of the dying of the year when we approach its close, but better is the thought that it is a living year from which we are parting. No year in which we have lived and wrought ever can be a dead year. One writes:

> Why cry so many voices, choked with tears,
> "The year is dead?" It rather seems to me
> Full of such rich and boundless life to be,
> It is a presage of the eternal years.
> Must it not live in us while we, too, live?
> Part of ourselves are now the joys it brought;

Part of ourselves is, too, the good it wrought
In days of darkness. Years to come may give
Less conflict, less pain, less doubt, dismay,—
A larger share of brightness than this last;
But victory won in darkness that is past
Is a possession that will far outweigh
All that we have lost. So let us rather cry,
"This year of grace still lives; it cannot die."

If we have lived truly, earnestly, wisely, any year we have passed through is to us indeed a living year. It lives in us in its lessons, its disillusions, its impressions, its influences, its new strength gained in struggle, its victories, its testings, its cleansings, its new revealings of God, its friendships and fellowships. It lives in us, too, in its losses which have been turned to gains, its sorrows which have been illumined by divine comfort. Then the year lives, too, if we have been faithful in love's duty, in the things we have done, in the words we have spoken, the influences of good we have given out. We have dropped seeds and planted trees which shall be growing and bearing fruit and feeding the world's hunger, long years hence. If we have numbered our days aright, an old year is indeed a living year, crowded with life —a year which shall tell on all our future years and which shall make the world's life better, sweeter, richer, nobler.

The lesson may be broken up a little. We so number our days when we give to each one as it passes its own measure of faithfulness. Days come to us one by one. God breaks up his great years into little sections for us that we may be able to get along with our work, our burdens and our struggles. He who has learned this secret has gotten part at least of this lesson into his heart. Take the single days as they come to you. Look not beyond the horizon which night stretches so short a way before you. Take the one little day. Do all its duties faithfully. Accept its blessings. Seize its opportunities. Endure its trials. Meet its temptations victoriously. Bear its burdens. Open your heart to its love. Miss not its privileges. Do all the kindness you can. Make it a beautiful day.

Any one can live one single day sweetly, victoriously. Make to-day beautiful. Then do the same with to-morrow, and with the next day, and so on to the end of your life. Thus you will number your days in a way that will make them bright with divine radiancy. Thus you will write on each day's page a record of which you will not be ashamed when it is spread before you on the judgment-day.

We can never number our days rightly if we do

not have God in them. We ask God to teach us to number our days. One of the first lessons of true wisdom we have to learn is that we cannot leave God out of our life. Human guidance has its place. It is one of Christ's ways of guiding us. We all feel stronger for tried human companionship, for wise human counsel; but the human is not enough. Human wisdom is fallible; human strength is often weakness. We must have Christ as guide and companion. Our morning prayer each day should be, "Lord, teach thou me to number my days."

We need God's forgiveness on the best of our days. Can we hold up our hands before God, at the close of any day and say: "I am free from sin. I have lived this day perfectly. I have not blotted any of its white moments. I have spoken only good words. I have done only right things. I have no sins to confess"? We have failed in our endeavors. We have fallen below even our own ideals. We have done things we ought not to have done. We have left undone things we ought to have done. We have failed in our duties to each other—love's duties. We have not been always charitable toward the faults and infirmities of others. We have not been always kind, gentle and for-

giving. We have not been always the good Samaritan to the wounded ones we have found in life's tragic way. Then toward God we have been remiss. We have done at best only fragments of our duty. There is not one day when our evening prayer could be closed without the confession of sin and the pleading for mercy. Four days before her death, Helen Hunt Jackson wrote this prayer:

Father, I scarcely dare to pray,
So clear I see, now it is done,
That I have wasted half my day,
And left my work but just begun;
So clear I see that things I thought
Were right or harmless, were a sin;
So clear I see that I have sought,
Unconscious, selfish aims to win;
So clear I see that I have hurt
The souls I might have helped to save;
That I have slothful been—inert,
Deaf to the call thy leaders gave.

We need God, too, in getting a heart of wisdom from our experiences. As soon as we find a fault in our disposition or character we should set to work to have it cured. As soon as we see a duty which we ought to do, but which thus far we have failed to do, we should immediately begin doing it. We should be ever reaching after the finest things in life and

character—whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are lovely. When we make a mistake, it is idle to spend time weeping over it—tears wash out no blot, make no amends—rather we should put all the energy of our regret into better living, guarding well lest we fall into the same error again to-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow, until our feet have worn a path for themselves in the wrong way. The wisdom we expect to get from experience is wisdom for life, that we may daily grow in beauty of soul, in strength of character and in helpfulness to our fellow-men. In all this we need God. As the sweetest flower needs the sunshine and the rain or dew from heaven, so do our lives need heaven's benediction to give them true loveliness.

"The spider walks with wit and will,
She frames her wheel and she is sped;
But 'tis the dew's gift, not her skill,
That hangs with diamonds every thread.

With pains and patience we no less
Shape out our lives, but yet allow
That all our brightest happiness
Is sent from heaven, we know not how."

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